



# Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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# LABOUR: FIGHT THE COUP

Labour's right is trying to stage a coup. If the Corbyn leadership and the unions stand firm, and force the right wing to put up a candidate against Corbyn in a new leadership contest which Corbyn wins, this attempted coup could turn into a rout.

But if it goes the other way — if the unions swing over to back a rotten "compromise", or if Corbyn buckles — then the right wing will be in pole position to shut down all the channels reopened in the last year. They won't be able to do it all at once, but they will be well-placed to destroy today's possibilities of creating a real working class alternative in British politics.

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**AFTER 23 JUNE, FIGHT FOR UNITY OF WORKERS  
OF ALL ORIGINS AND ACROSS EUROPE**

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# Four months of struggle against the labour law

By Olivier Delbeke

On Thursday 23 June, for the first time since the Gaullist state ban on the 8 February 1962 demonstration against the war in Algeria, which ended in the massacre of eight CGT activists in the Charonne Metro station, French trade unions saw their demonstration banned by the authorities.

In the face of the firm refusal by the unions (CGT, FO, FSU, Solidaires, UNEF, UNL, FIDL) to back down, the government relented, much to the disgust of the right-wing *Figaro* newspaper, which ran the headline "The government obeys the CGT". The demonstration finally took place in a limited area, with 60,000 attending, despite an extraordinary police operation around Place de la Bastille.

After spending four years meticulously and obstinately refusing to make even the smallest gesture towards governing in the interests of the popular, left-wing electorate that voted it in, the Hollande-Valls government has decided to round off its sorry stint with a big showstopper: nothing less than the destruction of the Labour Code.

After having passed several socially regressive laws, such as the Macron Law and the Rebsammen Law [both of which reduce employers' obligations vis-a-vis trade unions and collective agreements], Valls has now asked a young and inexperienced politician from the right wing of the Socialist Party to propose a bill which is based on the neo-liberal idea that regulations which protect workers are the cause of mass unemployment (in France, more than five million people for whom the Hollande years bear the bitter taste of broken promises), and that therefore a fundamental deregulation of the labour market is the only possible means of improving the lot of the unemployed and restoring "growth".

If the opposition among union leaderships to the previous laws was weak or superficial, this time a combination of factors has permitted the mass mobilisation which



we have seen developing since the start of March.

First of all, there were grassroots initiatives, and initiatives taken by middle layers of trade union activist structures, such as the appeal "Labour Law? No Thanks!" (<http://loitravail.lol/>), which combined a strong set of arguments which took apart and explained the bill, article-by-article, and an online petition campaign which gathered over 1.3 million signatures.

There was a fear amongst union leaders, who saw themselves losing all ability to negotiate on workers' behalf, because the logic of "social dialogue" is not to negotiate between unions and employers to obtain improvements (big or small) for workers, but rather, to "negotiate" bosses' demands. That went hand in hand with a fear that it would become impossible to "be reformist", because of the law's attack on the very possibility of making reforms in favour of workers, by creating a permanent upheaval of the rules, by putting an end to a Labour Code as a universally appli-

cable set of laws which limits competition between workers. The new law would achieve this by allowing each employer to sidestep the Labour Code, by giving legal priority to local collective agreements which would take precedence over national, sectoral collective agreements.

## SOCIAL ANGER

**Finally, a deep social anger has broken out against the depth of the social crisis.**

This has wound up crystallising at a moment when the parties of the Left Front, as well as the organisations of the far left, had shown themselves incapable, since 2012, of forming a credible mass opposition to the neoliberal policies implemented by the Hollande government since day one.

Since the first and last attempt at a national cross-union summit on the model of 2010, i.e., with the CFDT union federation supporting the spirit if not the letter of the labour law, in late February, we have since seen a series of days of action with calls for strikes and demonstrations being supported by a "stable" cross-union alliance consisting of the CGT, FO, the FSU, SUD-Solidaires, UNEF (students), UNL (college students) and FIDL (college students). The unifying (and politically spot-on!) demand of the cross-union alliance is for the withdrawal of the law, which is "neither amendable, nor negotiable".

To date there have been 12 days of action and that is impressive. But the main problem of this mobilisation lies in the fact that the union leaders fear "winning", because a defeat of the government, which a withdrawal of the law would represent, would mean the political death of Hollande. On the one hand, the union leaderships are

snookered by the pressure of the masses, who know the terrible meaning of this law: so the leaders themselves fear for their position as the acknowledged negotiators on behalf of the workers. But on the other hand, they want to "negotiate" this law with a government which has made a conscious decision to concede nothing. Instead of a tactic of a mobilisation which concentrates the forces of the movement in order to force the government to give way, that is, a general strike over two to five days with a threat of fighting to the end, they have opted to hop from date to date through the calendar.

The political nature of this contest of strength is shown by the government's systematic recourse to repression. At the outset (March), the actions of college and university students were the main target. The policy was to intimidate young people, with the message "if you revolt, you will be beaten and teargassed!". Since then, everyone has taken their baton blows and teargas clouds, from a policing policy which, especially in Paris and the big cities, is designed to lead to clashes, with or without the assistance of the "casseurs", a vague term which covers ultra-left elements who aim at "provoking riots to generate revolution" and the young and young-at-heart who are exasperated by police provocations.

On 10 May, when the government was due to discuss the law, in light of the weak parliamentary support for the bill which was reduced to the Socialist Party parliamentary fraction alone (and even this group was riven by "frondeurs" [rebels]) Valls chose to activate the constitution's Article 49-3, which allows a government to force an issue by transforming parliamentary debate on a given bill into

a piece of blackmail, with the vote reduced to a vote of confidence "for or against the government". This had the effect of cutting short the parliamentary debate, and of heading off attempts at amendments. Since then, over the month of June, the law was subject to the deliberations of the Senate, where the right-wing majority added even worse amendments to the text that had been adopted in the Assembly under Article 49-3.

And the strikes? Unlike the strike waves of 1995, 2003, 2006, or 2010, there are fewer strikes... and more. Fewer, because the most-mobilised sectors from these previous movements (RATP, post, hospitals, teachers) are not striking, or striking in small numbers, with the exception of the SNCF, but at the same time, there are many more one-off strikes, including minority strikes, which cover all sectors, public and private.

SNCF, EDF, road freight drivers and dockers are the main and most visible groups in the mobilisations, but their actions have more the character of blockades, more or less prolonged, than of the strikes which spread in 1936 or 1968.

Finally, the real feat of the last four months is that in spite of the drip-drip tactic of the union leaderships, chosen so as to avoid calling a general strike, wave after wave of strikes or demonstrations continue to give voice to a movement of resistance, which can still bring hundreds of thousands or even millions into the streets, as on 14 June.

The problem is that this movement is in danger of running out of steam if it does not find a way of knocking out its opponent once and for all. The result is a political ferment, which is illustrated by the Nuit Debout protests, which, while limited to a phenomenon involving a few thousand people in Place de la République, nevertheless expresses radicalisation of opposition to capitalist society and to anti-social governments of the 1%.

The stakes of this conflict are huge: were they to lose, French workers would be reduced to pre-1936 conditions. But apart from pure and simple repression, the state of emergency laws, Article 49-3 and a media barrage, the government has run out of efficient auxiliary methods to support its plans: the CFDT has been completely discredited in the eyes of working-class public opinion, and has therefore become useless to the government. Every passing day reveals the strain acting on the government. And quite apart from the dreadful mess that the Socialist Party has prepared for itself in the 2017 election, the President is losing credibility, which is setting off a crisis of the regime that goes well beyond a simple governmental crisis.

**Nothing is decided yet: let's do all we can to push them back and bring them down!**

## Pro-Kurdish activist arrested

By Simon Nelson

**British academic and socialist activist Chris Stephenson was arrested on 15 March after attending a hearing for activists who had signed a Academics for Peace statement calling on Turkey to end its attacks on the rights of Kurds.**

After being searched at the court and been found to have in his possession leaflets advertising Kurdish new year and produced by the Kurdish HDP, he was charged with making "propaganda for a terrorist organisa-

tion." He was acquitted and released on 23 June. During his trial he was firm in stating that calling for peace could not be viewed as terrorism and called for the release and acquittal of two journalists and another academic who had been arrested after showing their support for *Özgür Gündem*, a pro-Kurdish publication.

Stephenson has a long history with the IST (the SWP's international groups) in Britain and Turkey.

**Stephenson's arrest is part of a wave of repression now taking place in Turkey.**



## Teachers: all out on 5 July!

By Pat Murphy, National Union of Teachers Executive (p.c.)

Members of the largest teaching union, the NUT, will take strike action on 2 July in England to demand nationally agreed terms and conditions for all teachers in all state-funded local authority and academy schools.

The action is also demanding increased funding for schools and an end to cuts. 60% of secondary schools in England and 15% of primaries are now academies and can set their own terms and conditions.

Back in March the government announced they would force all schools to become academies. That prompted the NUT Executive to propose strike action to demand all teachers have agreed national conditions. The proposal was endorsed by the union's conference and a ballot for action closed on 23 June. 92% of those who voted supported the strike call.

Despite an apparent climbdown by Nicky Morgan in May the government have made it very clear that they intend to proceed with plans to force all schools to become academies by 2020. That is why everyone who opposes the break-

up and marketisation of the education system should fully and actively support the NUT action.

The government want to effectively abolish local authority-maintained schools and, in the process, abolish teachers' national terms and conditions. The School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD) and the so-called "Burgundy Book" (which provides terms of paid maternity and sick leave and notice periods) only apply statutorily to maintained schools. If these schools no longer exist then there will be no statutory national pay and conditions for teachers.

- The 24% turnout for the ballot suggests that there is plenty of work to do to increase awareness of the scale of this threat and to build confidence that action can win. We need to establish that:

- There was no real u-turn and all schools will be forced to become academies

- The threat to teachers' pay and conditions is existential — every employment condition we now have beyond the employment law minimums are at risk

- This includes our PPA time, pay ranges, notice periods, maternity and sick pay and a host of other rights

- The threat is not only for the future — teachers in academies and free schools are already being dismissed without notice, denied their normal maternity pay and so on

- The key demand of the action is very straightforward — a national contract for all teachers, which is negotiated with our unions

- Funding cuts are already costing jobs in schools and leading to the denial of pay progression. Unless we restore funding that will get worse.

5 July is not a one-protest strike but the start of an ongoing campaign. The GMB has decided to ballot in Autumn and other school unions have been approached to join this dispute.

It is important union material says all of these things. Clear messages about the purpose of the action and the intention to conduct a serious fight are the best tools for making 5 July effective. It shouldn't be a matter of waiting to see if that clarity comes from the top.

**The rank-and-file network LANAC will be sending out material which spells out this case**

• <https://letsactnetwork.wordpress.com/>

## Rents spiral: up 48% since 2007

By Colin Foster

Even on the mean average income — which is quite a bit higher than the median income, the income of the worker halfway up the income range — a young worker now has to pay out 57% of her or his income to rent an average one-bedroom home in London.

A 13 June report from the property services firm Countrywide found that even relatively well-off workers can't afford to rent on their own in London. Two young full-time workers splitting the rent of a two-bedroom home might scrape by, spending 35% of their post-tax income on rent in London, and a high proportion elsewhere too: an average of 27% across Britain.

The average rent of a one-bed-

room home in London is £1,133 per month. At 57% of the post-tax income of an average full-time worker aged under 30 that is a 16% increase on the 41% of income in 2007. Rents have risen by 48% since 2007, more than four times as fast as the 11% increase in incomes.

The root cause of all these problems is the measures by successive governments since Thatcher in the 1980s to make it impossible for councils to build more than a few new homes, and their pressure on councils to sell off their stock. Private renting is now more common than social renting.

The Tories' Housing Act, which became law in May, will make this worse. From April 2017 council-tenant households with a total income of over £40,000 a year in London, £31,000 outside — which is not a lot for a household total — will have to pay an extra £150 a

year for every £1,000 income above £40,000 or £31,000, and so, for example, £3,000 extra a year if the household income is £60,000 or £51,000.

From a date yet to be fixed, councils will be able to offer new tenants only fixed term tenancies, usually for five to ten years; and they will be forced to sell off higher-value homes whenever they fall vacant. Islington council, in London, for example, estimates that it will lose at least 300 properties each year from the council stock.

**The answer is powers for councils to take over houses left vacant or convert commercial properties; nationalisation of land; funds for councils to build new homes; and rent controls and tenant rights for tenants in the private sector.**

## Who profits from your pension fund?

By Rhodri Evans

**Railpen is the pension scheme covering 500,000 current and former railworkers in Britain.**

According to a new book, *What they do with your money*, reviewed in the *Financial Times* on 18 June, it used to believe it was paying £75 million a year to financiers to manage its funds.

Then it probed further, and found that £290 million was being sucked out of the pension fund each year in fees for "fund managers". Over 30 years, for example, that would be £9 billion, or over 40% of the total value of the fund.

"The finance industry is not designed efficiently to create wealth for others", comment the authors. "It has become positively awesome at creating wealth for itself". The financial sector takes 8% of total income in the USA; in 1950s, when much more real investment was being financed, it took 4%.

**The whole of high finance should be taken into public ownership, and its machine for enriching a few financiers should be replaced by a public, democratically-controlled, banking, insurance, and pension service.**

## Five Star movement heading for power?

By Hugh Edwards

**In the first round of Italy's municipal elections (early June) the governing Democratic Party of Prime Minister Matteo Renzi suffered big setbacks.**

This was the case in both the metropolitan heartlands of the north and centre and across the whole of the south. In 24 of the biggest towns and cities it lost upwards of 300,000 votes.

Over the weekend of 25-26 June in second round ballots in around 120 places, the Democratic Party was routed. This included the country's key cities — Rome, Torino, Milan Bologna, Napoli, Trieste.

In Torino and Rome the victors were from Grillo's populist Five Star Movement. In Napoli, where the government party didn't even make it to the final ballot, the radical independent magistrate, De Magistris crushed the divided and fragmented forces of the centre-right. But the same divided forces were united enough in Trieste to unseat the Democrats' candidate. And where the PD finally did just cross the finishing line ahead, in Milan and Bologna, the government party relied heavily on the support of the affluent and conservative quarters of both cities.

What emerges crystal clear is the mounting exhaustion of the "modernising" dynamic of the populist wave launched with the arrival of Renzi simultaneously to party leader and head of government, and the apex of its appeal in a 41% vote at the 2014 European elections. Though the PD was backed to the hilt by the country's rich and powerful, and Berlusconi (!), in the regional elections a year later, even then with massive abstentions, we saw the start of the dispersion of the energy of the much



Beppe Grillo

claimed regeneration of the corrupt-ridden and arthritic Italian capitalist formation.

The ritual parade of forecasts and promises that the country was now on the point of exiting two decades of retreat and stagnation has had to end. The project of the would-be Bonaparte from Florence, and his "party of the Nation", has ground to a halt.

The coming constitutional referendum may, whatever the outcome, seal the fate of the Renzi phenomenon. This is an institutional reform conceived in the wake of Renzi's 2014 victory in the euro elections and projected, along with a new electoral law, to coprofaster executive power.

Today it looks more than likely that Renzi's future adversary in a general election will be Grillo's party. But before that, in October's referendum, there could be a massive rejection of Renzi, and as a consequent upheaval the Democratic Party, in a context of wider economic and political instability.

**There is nothing in the arsenal of the 5 Star Movement's utopian nostrums or demagogic fantasies, and even less in their brief record of political office in several local councils, to suggest anything but disaster if Italy's despairing masses turn to it.**

# The left and the Brexit vote

By Martin Thomas

**On 24 June, as the Brexit referendum result hit the school where I work, both students and teachers were aghast. The idea that this was a “working-class revolt” inflicting “a massive reverse” on the rich and powerful had no takers in a school whose catchment area is among the 5% poorest in the country.**

Some students told me “I have dual nationality, Slovak and British [or whatever it might be], so I’ll be all right. But...” And they’d sigh. Yet some on the left are jubilant.

The Socialist Party claims “the fundamental character of the exit vote... was a working class revolt” causing “the anger and despair of Britain’s elite” and probably “the collapse of the Tory party”.

The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) is less fantastical, acknowledging that “the Left Leave campaign we were part of had only a marginal effect”. But somehow, it claimed, “the rich and the powerful... have suffered a massive reverse”.

The SP, the SWP, and the anaemic Lexit/Left Leave campaign have all responded by demanding an immediate general election and predicting a left Labour Corbyn victory in that election.

In fact, this moment of high dismay for the left has quickly been seized on by the Labour right to launch the motion of no confidence in Jeremy Corbyn they hadn’t dared to push until now. The direction of movement, for now, is not from Corbyn surge to a super-surge pushing the Tories out, but in the other direction.

“Cameron out” is no left-wing slogan when it is already underway, and he is due to be replaced by a more right-wing Tory! The Tories will now proceed with more right-wing business. Possibly some pro-EU Tories will choose to fade out of politics, but they’re not launching a party split now.

A quick general election is not as likely as is being widely claimed. Why ever would the new right-wing Tory leadership respond to

the democratic mandate they now claim, not by pressing ahead, but by nervously provoking a vote of no confidence?

Maybe Gove and Johnson will overreach themselves, and the left can rally and quickly turn things round. But not if the left tells itself that things are already going the right way!

The core argument of the Brexit left is that any disruption that causes dismay among the majority of the ruling class must automatically be good for the working class.

It was most exuberantly expressed in an article by former SWP leader John Rees on his Counterfire website on 15 June. The SWP, Lexit, and SP commentaries are only toned-down versions of Rees’s argument.

The tactical rule, so Rees argued, must be: “if we want to start dismantling the actually existing centres of power and so weaken the real and currently operative engines of exploitation and oppression that means opposing the main enemy: the ruling class currently embedded in the EU”.

Gove, Johnson, and Farage are ugly? “Sometimes your ugliest enemy isn’t your most powerful enemy”. The rule must be to set ourselves against the “most powerful enemy”. “Only someone entirely wedded to the linear school of historical analysis could fail to see an opportunity for the left in this situation. Minds uncomfortable with contradiction always have difficulty with social crises, of course”.

## CHAOS

**But if a more-reactionary minority of the ruling class can construct populist support to prevail over the majority, it does not thereby cease to be more reactionary.**

Revolutionary political crises inevitably come with some chaos and disorder, but the converse does not follow: that chaos and disorder bring revolution. Read Naomi Klein’s book on *The Shock Doctrine*, which chronicles many cases in recent decades where episodes of social chaos have been used by the right to push through devastating policies which they could not have implemented in calmer times.

Rees’s argument, and the SWP’s and the SP’s, that “crisis” of any sort must be good, reflects their demoralisation. Having lost, or half-lost, their belief in the possibility of a real social-revolutionary crisis, they cast around for “crises” of any sort as substitutes.

The disarray in the working class caused by a political event in which Gove, Johnson, and Farage have managed to draw a sizeable chunk of the class behind them is not a triumph for the left. Donald Trump has drawn in plebeian support to beat the Republican establishment. He might even win the presidential election. That will be a setback, not a great opportunity, for the working class and the left.

The clerical hierarchy in Iran channelled mass plebeian support in 1979 to defeat the pro-US majority of the Iranian ruling class. The result was terror against the working class, not socialist advance. There are dozens of other examples in history of the folly of Rees’s scheme.

The Socialist Party and SWP statements discuss a matter which does not bother Rees in his dialectical constructions: the character of the working-class element in the vote for Brexit.

They insist at length that it was not all racist, and not all pro-Ukip. Yes: to think of the numbers of jobs, or houses, or hospital beds, as fixed quantities, and respond by saying that the limited numbers must be kept for those already in Britain, is narrow-minded and false, but not racist as such.

Some people with no hostility to migrants were drawn in by the demagogic argument that Brexit would allow “us” to make “our own laws” or to “take control”. (The Brexiters were tactfully silent about which laws originating from the EU they objected to. In fact they are such laws as those implementing EU protections on working hours and agency workers, and even those were not “imposed”, but voted through by the Blair-Brown Labour government — rather reluctantly, but voted through — after Tory obstruction).

And some people were swayed by the same

sort of argument as the left Brexiters: that, whatever about migrants, whatever about laws, any protest against the status quo, the “elite”, must be good. Yet an incoherent kick against “the elite” is a substitute for and a diversion from real class-struggle mobilisation, not an example of it. The feeling may not be racist or pro-Ukip, but it is such that can be, and has been, channelled by racists, by Ukip, and by Tories.

(Rees claims that Ukip support fell during the referendum campaign. The poll figures bounced up and down a lot, but Ukip’s percentage rose from an average of 14% in polls between mid-March and mid-April to an average of 16% between late April and early June. The Tories’ lead over Labour rose from tiny between mid-March and late April — an average of 1.7% — to an average of 4% between late April and early June. No “collapse of the Conservative Party” there!)

The whole train of thought here, despite or maybe because of the manifest anxious desire of the SP and SWP to show themselves in tune with what they reckon to be working-class feeling, is patronising and manipulative, an example of what Marxists call “middle-class workerism”.

## OLDER

**That many older and worse-off workers and retired people voted “Leave” does not make “Leave” a more authentically working-class response than the “Remain” stance of younger, more educated (and often more educated precisely because younger), big-city, working-class people.**

Socialists will best serve our class brothers and sisters who voted “Leave” by arguing with them — not caricaturing them, not dismissing them, but treating them as intelligent women and men who have gone off course, as people do, but can and should be convinced by reason. When they are convinced, class-conscious and socialistic elements in their thinking, now suppressed and overwhelmed by the Brexit demagogic, will come to the fore.

The SP and the SWP, by contrast, seem to have given up on convincing workers. They look, awe-struck, at the Brexit surge with its “anti-elite” overtones, and scrabble to suggest ways in which that surge, as it is, can be managed, manipulated, redirected, so as to channel into their desired outcome of a general election and a Corbyn victory. Their approach is similar to a common caricature of the Trotskyist transitional-demands approach (one promoted both by opponents of the approach and some who consider themselves supporters of it): that transitional demands are those which appear “realistic”, not-specially-socialist, not-specially-radical, but lend themselves to mobilisations which can, in a way unknown to the workers involved, slide into socialist revolution. In the SP’s and the SWP’s constructions, Brexit has become a sort of fake “transitional demand” by which the dialectically-attuned can manoeuvre the working class into desired channels.

What is to be done now is to conserve and extend workers’ unity, between workers in Britain of all origins and between British and European workers; to defend migrant rights and the worker rights which have entered British law under pressure from the EU; to fight to redirect the social anger expressed in Brexit votes towards social solidarity, taxing the rich, and social ownership of the banks and industry; and to stand up for socialism.

**None of that can be done if the left falls for the fantasy that the Brexit vote already took things our way.**

## Defend freedom of movement!

By Gerry Bates

**The freedom of movement across borders which the European Union has created is one of its great gains. The labour movement should defend that.**

Attempts to give a “left cover” to restrictions on movement within Europe by saying that they could go with a more generous attitude to non-EU refugees should be refuted. The EU’s response to the recent flood of refugees from Syria, Eritrea, etc. has been despicable, but Britain’s has been worse. And no EU rule is stopping Britain from having as liberal a response as Germany, for instance.

The referendum result does not create a democratic obligation for Labour to block free movement from the EU. Plebiscitary democracy, democracy by snap votes between ill-posed alternatives, is not real democracy. We can now see that even the Brexit leaders didn’t really know what they wanted.

Polls found that while “more than three quarters (77%) of those who voted to remain thought ‘the decision we make in the referendum could have disastrous consequences for us as a country if we get it wrong’”, “more than two thirds (69%) of leavers, by



contrast, thought the decision ‘might make us a bit better or worse off as a country, but there probably isn’t much in it either way’.”

We can surely guess that most “Leave” voters want immigration blocked. But that guess no more creates a democratic obligation on Labour to support blocks than the consistent opinion-poll majorities the same way do. Or the consistent opinion-poll majorities for the death penalty, at least in some cases, ever since it was abolished in 1965, oblige Labour to bring back hanging.

Big-business groups like the Adam Smith Institute, anxious about the effect of Brexit on trade and capital flows, are not hesitating to argue that Britain should go for something like EEA status (the Norway option,

“almost” in the EU, and retaining freedom of movement).

The labour movement should fight for the rights of our brothers and sisters of diverse origins, and our links with workers across Europe, more resolutely than those big-business groups push their angle.

High rents, shortages of housing, and low pay, result from government and bosses’ policies, and should be mended anyway, migration or no migration, by policies for more social housing, rent controls, union rights, and a better minimum wage.

Migrants contribute £2.5 billion more in tax than they claim in benefits. Generally, countries with more immigration are economically more dynamic and prosperous. If the labour movement organises the migrants, the movement becomes stronger, culturally richer, broader-horizoned.

**It was good that Jeremy Corbyn spoke up for freedom of movement in the referendum campaign, and bad that he let himself being pushed on 25 June into announcing a “review” of Labour Party immigration policy.**

# Labour: fight the coup!

**Labour's right is trying to stage a coup. If the Corbyn leadership and the unions stand firm, and force the right wing to put up a candidate against Corbyn in a new leadership contest which Corbyn wins, this attempted coup could turn into a rout.**

The way will be open for the unions to get through Labour Party conference democratic reforms which they have already put in draft form, and for the Labour Party really to be revived as a living movement, close to the unions, and with the right wing discredited.

But if it goes the other way — if the unions swing over to back a rotten “compromise”, or if Corbyn buckles — then the right wing be in pole position to shut down all the channels reopened in the last year. They won't be able to do it all at once, but they will be well-placed to destroy today's possibilities of creating a real working class alternative in British politics.

With their staged series of shadow cabinet resignations, Labour's right have seized the chance of the dismay and disarray caused by the Brexit vote to try to reverse the Labour revival generated by the 2015 leadership contest and Jeremy Corbyn's landslide victory.

They have staged a stand-off, an open split in the Labour Party. They did not make the straightforward move to a leadership contest just by getting 50 MPs to nominate a rival candidate. If they'd done that then, according to their legal advice, Jeremy Corbyn had to be on the ballot paper in the leadership election, and likely to win.

They wanted to force Corbyn to resign, confident that if he does then they could deny any left-wing candidate the MP nominations necessary to get on the ballot paper, and so deny the members a choice.

As we go to press, the coup-plotters have staged a vote of no confidence among Labour MPs 172 to 40 (with 17 abstainers or spoiled ballots). It looks as if they will now nominate a candidate, or candidates, to oppose Corbyn in a new leadership election. They may still try some legal trick to get Corbyn off the ballot paper.

## GENERAL ELECTION

**Some of the coup-plotters talk about the desirability of Labour winning the next General Election.**

But that is clearly low in their priorities. Otherwise they wouldn't be splitting the party now. Otherwise they would shelve for now their criticisms of Corbyn and focus on unity against the shocked, dislocated, and divided Tories. At the very least, they'd do a leadership challenge later, and by the normal process of collecting nominations.

Some of them talk about unity. Some of them claim they have no difference with Corbyn's politics, and praise his kind and friendly manner. They so value unity... that they make a split! When they claim to have no serious political grounds!

Some of them say Corbyn has been weak. Sometimes he has — but only because he allowed anxiety to conciliate *them* and has therefore muted his message against the Tories.

The role in the script for those soft-soap types is to serve as cover for someone with a vaguely soft-left profile to emerge as front-person (while the hard right-wingers pull the levers in the background), and to try to persuade the members and the unions to support them as promising both unity and not-too-wrenching a reversal of Labour's course. To be for 2016 what Neil Kinnock was



**Right-wing has used the referendum as an excuse to put its coup plans into action.**

for 1983.

Some of them talk about Jeremy Corbyn being poor in the Remain campaign. That criticism is much more aptly applied to them. What about the Labour figures who joined platforms with the Tories, copying Labour's wretched policy in the Scottish separation referendum? What about Tom Watson and Ed Balls, who gave Leave a last-minute boost by saying that Labour should limit EU migration?

What about the Labour right-wingers from whom we heard nothing at all? What about Corbyn-baiter Gloria de Piero, whose safe-Labour constituency returned a 70% Leave vote? Or Stephen Kinnock, another Corbyn-baiter, who got a 57% Leave vote in his ultra-safe Labour area? Or Labour right-winger Alan Johnson, appointed to lead the Labour Remain campaign. Did you ever hear from

him? His Hull area voted 68% Leave.

They wail and scream about one-third of Labour voters backing Leave. That is bad, but not surprising: one-third of Lib Dem voters, and one-third of SNP voters, also went for Leave. Especially not surprising when for many older Labour voters, anti-EUism has been a major and sometimes dominant thread in Labour politics for the last half-century; when the 2015 Labour election campaign organisers, backed by most of the anti-Corbyn plotters but not by Corbyn, produced a “campaign mug” inscribed “Control Immigration”; when most pro-EU Labour politics has had, for 20 years, the neoliberal face of Blair and Brown, blandly praising “modernisation” and ignoring the havoc caused by free-ranging global capital in many working-class communities.

The coup-plotters want to return to the

same soft-Tory politics and undemocratic organisation which have gutted and enfeebled Labour's base for decades now, and block the possibilities of a renewal.

Anti-Corbyn Labour MP Yvette Cooper talks about “broader arrangements to build a wider consensus” with the Tories in the management of Brexit. Corbyn's own response to the 23 June decision has been weak — he should be more vigorous, from our angle, in defending freedom of movement and European ties, than the Tories now pressing the “Norway option” are from theirs — but these people want to be even weaker.

**Stay strong! Stand firm! Labour members and trade unionists must rally in defence of our movement's democracy.**

**Join Labour!**  
<https://join.labour.org.uk>

## Unite the left to fight back!

**Workers' Liberty activists are seeking discussions with other left “Remain” campaigners on collaboration now to campaign for:**

- Defence of migrant rights
- Defence of workers' rights
- Workers' unity between workers of all origins and across the new borders
- Tax the rich, expropriate the banks, give socialist answers to the social ills on which the Eurosceptics have fed.

We deny that the referendum, in which 16-17 year olds could not vote, in which the alternatives were not clear (the Brexit leaders visibly didn't expect to win, maybe didn't even want to win, and are evasive about what they plan), creates any democratic obligation for Labour to abandon defence of freedom of movement or to support any particular Tory scheme for Brexit. Labour should fight to minimise barriers are put up between Britain and Europe.

In pursuit of these demands and in campaigning for a workers' government, we'll be calling for the Labour Party to discuss and adopt demands like the above and to begin an energetic campaign for them along with unions in areas of identified high working class disaffection with the EU.

Which means, in the first place, that we must see off the Labour right's anti-Corbyn plotters, who are scapegoating Corbyn for discontent among Labour voters which is really the product of decades of arrogant right-wing Labour politics.

In Labour, Momentum, and the unions we're arguing for:

- No accommodation to the push against migrant rights; defend and extend freedom of movement; organise migrant workers.
- Labour and the labour movement must begin loudly to advocate and actually campaign for basic policies to address nationalism-feeding social distress: ban zero-hours contracts, raise the minimum wage,

strengthen union rights, create secure jobs in the public sector, build council houses, restore benefits, rebuild the NHS.

We're reaching out to the many left-minded people who are shocked by the 23 June result and want to discuss how to fight back. We'll be encouraging them to join the Labour Party and Momentum and be active with us, and organising public meetings on such themes as “Brake the Brexit surge, fight for workers' unity”. That's the best way to turn the widespread dismay among left-minded people into positive action rather than demoralisation and dispersal.

**We are alarmed about the implications of the Brexit vote, not only for remilitarisation of the Northern Ireland border with the rest of Ireland, but for a possible new Scottish-English border. That might become an EU-English border, requiring strict and comprehensive border checks, and physical barriers along its whole length.**

# 23 June: a victory for regression

**The vote in the 23 June referendum that Britain should leave the European Union was a victory for the forces of reaction and historical regression.**

It has fed the fires of reactionary nationalism and chauvinism in other EU countries, people who want to go back to a Europe of competing, and possibly warring, nation-states, to what degree and with what consequences remains to be seen.

In Britain, it has triggered a wave of attacks on migrants.

The move to unite Europe economically and then, more slowly, politically, began with the Coal and Steel Community of the initial six countries in 1951 and, in 1958, the creation of a Common Market. It was, even under bourgeois rule, a tremendous step forward from the Europe which had triggered two world wars in the first half of the 20th century. It was good for the working class and its labour movements in that it created an extra-national framework for European working-class unity.

Britain's withdrawal is movement in the other direction, movement that greatly encourages those in other parts of the EU who want it to break up. It encourages the European racists and fascists like France's FN.

In fact, of course, the referendum that has dealt such a blow at European unity was fought centrally not on European unity but on immigration and the free movement of labour in the EU. The vote was a product of the long campaign of politicians and much of the press — Murdoch's *Sun* and Desmond's *Express* for the worst examples — to intensify fear and resentment against immigrants. It was a response to the mass flight into Europe driven by the Syrian civil war, itself triggered by the "Arab Spring" of 2011.

The referendum result has so far created a crash in the financial markets and political chaos. The campaigners for exit probably did not expect to win and had made no plans of what to do if they did. It is not even certain that Britain will in fact leave the EU.

Legally the referendum result is a "recommendation" to the government, not a binding decision. Parliament could in theory decide not to implement it, or refuse to agree a deal designed to implement it.

As of 27 June three and a half million people have signed an online petition for a second referendum. The majority for Leave was clear, but only 52% of the vote. One quarter of those entitled to do so did not vote; the electoral registers were depleted by new registration procedures; the Tories had voted down plans to let 16 and 17 year olds vote. It is being argued that a decision of such immense consequence should not be decided by so small a majority, that at least a 60% vote should be required.

Boris Johnson, the leading Leave campaigner, has declared he now plans for "intensifying European cooperation and partnership in a huge number of field... British people will still be able to go and work in the EU; to live; to travel; to study; to buy homes and to settle down... There will continue to be... access to the single market".

The bad joke here is that if Britain remains

## How Northern Ireland voted

<http://bit.ly/290WK3a>



**Brexit campaign gave green light to xenophobia**

in the single market, it will still have to allow the free movement of EU workers, opposition to which fuelled the Leave referendum victory.

If the opponents of exit have will and determination, all sort of blocking or limiting moves are possible. There are precedents. Denmark had a second vote on the Maastricht Treaty. Ireland had second votes on the Nice Treaty and the Lisbon Treaty. After Norway voted against entry to the EU in 1994, its government negotiated entry to the European Economic Area (in effect, three-quarters EU membership), which remains stable.

A big majority in Scotland voted to stay in the EU. Scotland has its own government which may refuse abide by a UK decision to leave the EU. The Scottish nationalists see the chance of a second referendum on Scottish independence; the result of the Leave vote may be to accelerate the process of separation between England and Scotland.

In both the Six and the Twenty-Six counties of Ireland there is a decisive majority for staying in the EU. Sinn Fein has called for a referendum on a united Ireland. It is improbable that the desire of a majority in Northern Ireland to remain in the EU will be stronger than the Northern Ireland Unionists' aversion to unity with the 26 County state. The effect of a Northern Ireland majority voting contrary to the English majority will add a new instability to the already fraught situation.

### TORY PARTY

**The Tory party is more divided and gripped by corrosive internal rancour than at any time since the fall of Margaret Thatcher in 1990, and possibly more than since the Suez crisis of 1956.**

Boris Johnson, the Tory right-winger posing as a lovable buffoon who joined the Leave campaign as a career-building exercise, finds himself unexpectedly victorious in possession of Leave policies he may not even believe in. Large parts of the Tory party establishment are determined to stop him becoming leader.

The anti-Corbyn camp in the Parliamentary Labour Party and the Labour shadow cabinet see their chance to unhorse Jeremy Corbyn, blaming him for the fact that 30-odd per cent of Labour voters went for Leave and ignored the party's appeal to vote Remain. They accuse him of lacking conviction as an advocate of Remain.

Their attack on Corbyn by these politically bankrupt orphans of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, is preconceived, and the referendum defeat a mere "good reason". They have been planning to move against Corbyn since he was elected.

To be sure, Corbyn lit up no landscape in

the referendum campaign. Labour should have campaigned with fire and conviction for European working-class unity in a united Europe, for a socialist United Europe, and for radical democratic reform of the creaky system of bureaucracy that runs Europe under a democratic but weak European Parliament.

Instead, most prominent Labour figures mumbled "us too" after Cameron to recommend a Remain vote. Against that dismal background, Corbyn himself fought a decent, politically brave, and principled campaign. He insisted on separating himself from the Tories. He was the only Labour figure to openly defend the free movement of Labour. He gave specifically working-class reasons for voting Remain — to make a social Europe, not a neo-liberal Europe. That was a damn sight better than what any of his post-referendum critics did. None of his critics dared follow Corbyn in confronting the anti-immigrant demagogic; not one of them dared defend the free movement of labour.

The Leave camp ran a scandalously dishonest campaign, lining up working-class voters with demagogic anti-immigrant agitation. The Labour campaign should have defended free movement of workers, as Corbyn did, and countered the anti-immigrant demagogic positively by pointing out that the availability of housing, schooling, medical care, jobs, are not things fixed in iron and concrete foundations, but can be altered by government policies.

It should have counterposed to the "Leave" demagogic a programme for what a Labour government would do in those fields. It should have campaigned positively for the unity of workers of all origins, and the unity of British and European workers. It should

have used the fact that the leading Leave demagogues like Johnson and Gove are right-wingers and, by strong ideological conviction, anti-working-class.

It was in this field that the progressive element in a bourgeois united Europe fell down before the incapacity of the European bourgeoisies to satisfy the needs of "their own" workers.

There was a "class" element in the Leave campaign. It is workers who feel most acutely the social pressures on resources. That those resources can be taken from the rich, and that workers, native and newcomer, should unite to fight for that, was no central part of the Remain campaign.

For Cameron and his like, it could not have been. For a left-wing-led Labour Party, it should have been central, but despite some good individual statements by Corbyn and McDonnell, it was not.

The horrible truth is that most of the left "to the left" of Corbyn's party did not do what was needed either, or mumbled incoherently when doing it. The Socialist Party has come out against free movement of workers in the European Union — that is, in weasel words, they have endorsed the anti-immigrant demonology, on the grounds that "the workers wouldn't understand" if they did otherwise.

There were exceptions — Momentum, Left Unity, Socialist Appeal, Socialist Action, Red Flag, the Socialist Network, and of course ourselves — but groups like the SP, Counterfire, and the SWP continued the anti-EU politics that the kitsch-revolutionary left has peddled for decades, and in reality did that in tandem with right-wing agitation against immigration and immigrants dressed up as protest against the EU "elite".

For decades it has been an article of faith for many groups on the left, from the *Morning Star* to *Socialist Worker* and beyond, that socialists should be against the EU and favour getting out of "the bosses' united Europe" in situations where, as now, the alternative to the EU was in fact regression to walled-off bourgeois nation-states. Some of the left groups proclaimed themselves for a Socialist United States of Europe. But that was like the "holy water" that a priest sprinkles on the coffin at Catholic funerals: nothing to do with anything real. An afterthought.

**If Corbyn and McDonnell hold their nerve in face of the revolt of the unreconstructed Blairites and Brownites, then they can beat them. In that effort they are entitled to the support of all serious socialists.**

## Iraq war report out on 6 July

**The Chilcot Inquiry into the Blair government's decision to join the 2003 invasion of Iraq, which has been grinding on for seven years, will be published on 6 July.**

The report was completed two months ago, but the current government got the publication date pushed back until after the EU referendum on 23 June.

Although the report will not consider or suggest criminal charges, it will probably censure and discredit Tony Blair and those who went along with him. Very few people now defend Blair's decision. In polls, more than half the public say they can "never forgive" Tony Blair for it.

Chilcot may be a factor in the timing of the Labour right's attempted coup against

Corbyn. Post-Chilcot fall-out will give Jeremy Corbyn a high profile as one of the few MPs at the time actively to oppose the invasion, and discredit the Labour MPs who backed Blair.

However, if and when the coup-makers nominate an anti-Corbyn candidate for leader, they are likely to choose a cleanskin who claims to be soft-left and maybe even was outside Parliament and against the invasion in 2003.

**Don't be fooled: the coup is all about returning Labour to the sort of party regime, and the sort of politics, which produced that decision to join the invasion.**

# Labour movement unity, not nationalist separatism!

By Dale Street

**Will there be another referendum on independence for Scotland after the EU referendum?**

That is now a central focus of mainstream political debate in Scotland. And that spells bad news for socialists and the broader Labour and trade union movement.

At a UK level the EU referendum saw a 51.9% majority in favour of "Leave" on a 72% turnout. In England 53.4% backed "Leave" on a 73% turnout. But in Scotland 62% backed "Remain" on a 67% turnout.

The day after the referendum former SNP leader Alex Salmond responded to the different voting patterns in England and Scotland by touring television studios bullishly predicting another referendum on Scottish independence within two years.

The same day SNP leader Nicola Sturgeon struck a more cautious note.

Relying on a clause in the SNP Holyrood election manifesto that a change in "material circumstances", such as Scotland voting to remain in the EU but Britain voting to leave, would justify a second referendum, Sturgeon said that a second referendum was "highly likely".

Unlike Salmond, Sturgeon recognises the problems confronting what would be, for the SNP, a make-or-break second referendum.

Turnout in the EU referendum in Scotland was not only lower than in England but also markedly lower than in the independence referendum of 2014 — 67%, compared with 85%.

1,700,000 people in Scotland voted last week in favour of the UK remaining in the EU — compared with just over two million who voted in favour of Scotland remaining in the UK in 2014. (But the electorate in 2014 was larger, as 16 and 17-year-olds had a vote.)

Support for Scottish independence does not equate with support for "Remain" in the EU, the avowed trigger for another referendum. In the run-up to the EU referendum opinion polls found that one in three SNP voters backed "Leave". Exit polling on the day of the referendum came up with the same figure.

In fact, in an article in the *Sunday Herald* prior to the EU referendum Sturgeon's sales pitch to "Yes" voters was not the merits of EU membership but the prospect of another referendum on Scottish independence: "Sturgeon tells Yes supporters: Voting Remain is best hope for second independence referendum."

There are also political problems in staging a second referendum on independence, and economic problems in winning a majority to vote "Yes".

The decision to call such a referendum is a reserved power. The Westminster Parliament would have to agree to it.

Sturgeon's counter-argument is that the SNP and Greens will vote together in Holyrood in September on "legislation" for a second referendum, and that it would be "inconceivable" for Westminster to refuse authority for another referendum.

The economic problems which would confront an independent Scotland remain unchanged, if not worse, than in 2014.

Scotland has a structural deficit of £15 billions (9.7% of its GDP). Public spending in Scotland is higher than in the UK, with the gap of some £9 billions a year funded by the Barnett Formula.

The slump in the price of oil and a weak economy on the brink of recession (even before the EU referendum) have added to the



economic problems, as well as exposing the hollowness of the economic predictions contained in the 2014 White Paper on Independence.

And then there is the question of the currency in an independent Scotland. In the space of the last fortnight the SNP has come up with four varieties of what the currency would, or might, be: the pound; the euro; a new currency linked to the pound; an independent Scottish floating currency.

On the other hand, the SNP might find it easier to sell the idea of an independent Scotland in the event of a second independence referendum.

With the UK heading out of the EU anyway, an independent Scotland would not be at risk of losing membership of the EU. The EU would be portrayed as a milch cow which would make up for the losses incurred by exit from the UK. And a "Yes" vote would be presented as the expression of an outward-looking pan-Europeanism.

## UNITED FIGHTBACK

**Why is or any or all of this bad news for socialists and the labour movement?**

Firstly, because the SNP's drive for a second referendum and independence cuts across the immediate tasks faced by the working class of all four nations in the UK in the aftermath of last week's EU referendum.

A united fightback by the trade union movement, supported by the Labour Party, to defend employment rights, jobs, pay and migrant workers needs to be built as the impact of last week's vote kicks in.

Campaigning for independence for Scotland contributes nothing to mounting such a united fightback. In fact, it does far worse than that.

It will reinforce the divisions in the working class opened up by the EU referendum, i.e. the fact that England and Wales backed "Leave", while Scotland and Northern Ireland backed "Remain".

Within Scotland itself a renewed campaign for independence — inevitably accompanied by an even more severe version of the virulent toxicity of the 2014 referendum campaign — will (re-)open another front of working-class and communal division.

Secondly, because socialists and the labour movement need to address and overcome the reasons why many working-class communities — and not just in England — voted "Leave" last week.

This means campaigning for socialist policies which: provide an answer to legitimate concerns about austerity, inequality, unemployment and social deprivation; challenge and overcome illegitimate racist scapegoating; and provide a basis for rebuilding the labour movement as an effective social force.

The not-at-all-socialist SNP will certainly not be campaigning for such policies. In fact, a revived labour movement mobilised on the basis of class-struggle politics is anathema to the SNP.

Thirdly, because the SNP's drive for another referendum and independence flows out of its defining nationalist ideology, one which is at odds with the most basic principles of socialism and the labour movement.

Socialist and labour movement politics — however imperfectly expressed in practice — have at their core the basic idea of uniting workers across borders. At the core of nationalism is a drive to rally and mobilise on the basis of national identity.

Instinctively, the SNP looks for what divides rather than what unites. It does not look to the social and economic causes of different voting patterns. Instead, it collapses them into national identities.

Thus, "England" voted "Leave" (although over 13 millions — 47% — did not) while "Scotland" voted "Remain" (although over a million — 38%, including a third of the SNP's own supporters — did not).

In fact, the political psychology which led so many voters to back "Leave" last week is not fundamentally different from the political psychology of the demand for Scottish independence, save that whereas the former blame Brussels the latter blame "Westminster".

Fourthly, because the SNP's relaunch of campaigning for independence will be used to obscure and divert attention away from its own sorry record in power in Holyrood over the past nine years.

It is a record of a collapsing NHS, increasing class inequalities in education, rocketing student debts, cuts in local government funding, the imposition of austerity, tax handouts to the rich through the council tax freeze, and a litany of abandoned manifesto promises.

None of these were caused by the result of a referendum on EU membership held last week. They were all the product of the SNP's own political decisions and priorities.

In fact, the SNP's only lasting "achievement" of those nine years in power was its

referendum campaign of 2013/2014.

This polarised an electorate around what had previously been non-conflicting national identities. The demagogic of "Quislings", "traitors to the nation", "Red Tories", harassment on the streets and systematic cybernetic intimidation all helped whip up the requisite flag-waving fervour.

(If the 2014 referendum had not so politically toxic one could laugh at Salmond's recent contrast of the "pretty poisonous" EU referendum campaign with the "hugely uplifting experience" of the 2014 referendum, or Iain Macwhirter's simultaneous discovery of "two very different kinds of nationalism".)

That is the real record of the SNP's "civic nationalism" in power: social and economic conservatism masked by a divisive nationalist rhetoric. And now the SNP is all set to unleash a new wave of that stock-in-trade nationalist poison.

One would have to be wilfully blind to claim that the result of the EU referendum has not raised new questions about relations between the four main nations and national identities which make up the UK.

But the basic argument about Scottish independence has not changed. To pose, in the manner of the SNP, independence for Scotland as the "solution" or the "correct" response to the EU referendum result only helps entrench the idea that nationality, not class, is the key axis of politics.

Through exploiting voters' alienation by the politics of Blair and Murphy the SNP has succeeded in eclipsing class politics by the politics of nationalism and national identity. This has left the labour movement in Scotland in a weakened state.

**Socialists can play an irreplaceable role in helping rebuild and transform the movement into one capable of beating back the new nationalist offensive, counterposing a campaign which brings together workers of all national identities to the toxic separatism of another referendum on Scottish independence.**

## Europe: the Stalinist roots of the "left-exit" myth

**The revolutionary left once had reputable politics towards Europe, an inheritance from Trotsky that was not finally dispensed with until the early 1970s. The story of how the British revolutionary left went from an independent working class stance to accommodation with chauvinism and Stalinist "socialism-in-one-country" deserves to be better known.**



**Read this Workers' Liberty supplement here:**  
[• bit.ly/28XkBT2](http://bit.ly/28XkBT2)

# Sanders: Primary is over, now the real work begins

By Eric Lee\*

**Bernie Sanders' presidential campaign was the largest mobilisation of the American Left in history.**

He won more than twenty states and over ten million votes. His vote total was more than triple that achieved by Ralph Nader in 2000, and five thousand times larger than the votes won by the last Socialist Party candidate for president back in 1956. And he came incredibly close to defeating Hillary Clinton and capturing the Democratic nomination.

No one expected this kind of success, least of all Sanders himself. And yet certain factors such as the post-2008 economic crisis and the growing up of new, post-Cold-War generation for whom the term "socialist" is not toxic, made the Sanders campaign possible. For American socialists, the Sanders campaign has settled the question of whether one needs to work within the framework of the Democratic Party or outside of it, and completely vindicates the strategy first proposed a half century ago by some of the country's leading socialists.

By early June, and especially in the wake of Sanders' weak performance in the California primary, it has become obvious that Clinton will be the Party's nominee for president. In a video address to his supporters, Sanders made clear that while the "political revolution" he has been preaching continues, and he encouraged everyone to get more active, to run for office and so on, his own race for the presidency is essentially over.

In his view, the main task facing his supporters and everyone else in the next few months is to ensure that Donald Trump is not elected president. While he did not endorse Clinton, he seems to have let up on most attacks against her, and will almost certainly endorse her at the July Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia if not sooner.

This will certainly divide Sanders' own supporters, many of whom have adopted a "Bernie Or Bust" attitude. Some supporters say they'll abstain on election day, others will write in Sanders' name, still others will support the Green Party's candidate, Dr Jill Stein. Media speculation that significant numbers of Sanders' supporters might back the Libertarian Party or even vote for Donald Trump seem unfounded.

So, what happens now?

In the weeks running up to the Convention, while the Sanders campaign won't be trying to woo super-delegates, they will be quite busy. Sanders has something like 1,900 delegates, and they will be a powerful voting block in support of progressive changes to the Democratic Party platform. Sanders has made it clear that he intends to fight for a platform that reflects his views rather than Clinton's, and he has a good chance of winning on some key issues, such as the call for



**Supporters at a Sanders rally**

a \$15 hourly minimum wage (Clinton supports \$12).

In addition to fighting for a better platform – and holding the candidates accountable – the Sanders campaign will focus on changing the rules that made it so hard for him to win this year. This includes allowing independent voters in each state to vote in the Democratic primaries, and for a weakening or abolition of the system of unelected super-delegates.

And Sanders intends to fight to remove party functionaries including Democratic National Committee chair Debbie Wasserman Schulz. Schulz, a member of Congress from Florida, who has been working behind the scenes all year to ensure a Clinton victory. Her brazen partisanship has triggered a challenge as one of Sanders' supporters, Tim Canova, is now running against her. A few days ago, the Florida AFL-CIO declined to endorse Schulz, showing how angry she has made progressives by her behaviour.

The Democratic National Convention, which begins on 25 July, promises to be one of the most exciting in decades. People have already compared it to 1980, when liberal challenger Ted Kennedy was the favourite in the hall, despite Jimmy Carter winning the nomination. Kennedy's address was a highlight of the convention as he upstaged a weak and disliked sitting president. It is possible that Sanders, who is expected to address the Convention, may receive a similar welcome.

There will also be a lot of activity outside the hall, with several groups planning activities, including street demonstrations. Some people have already compared the atmosphere to that in 1968, when the Democrats chose to nominate Vice President Hubert Humphrey, a deeply unpopular figure closely associated with the Vietnam War. Both Carter in 1980 and Humphrey in 1968 went down to defeat in the November gen-

eral elections.

Most observers believe that the vast majority of Sanders supporters will rally behind him when he endorses Clinton. They will support Clinton with little enthusiasm. One is reminded of the 1964 election, when student leftists heard the slogan "All the way with LBJ" (LBJ being President Lyndon B. Johnson) and replaced it with "Part of the way with LBJ". In 1976, socialist author Michael Harrington wrote an article entitled "Voting for Carter – without illusions". One expects something similar from most of the organised left in the US this year.

There will also be a certain amount of tactical voting. People in states that expect to go Democratic will feel more able to abstain or vote Green. But in states where Trump has a chance of winning, it is likely that pretty much the entire left and labour movement will support Clinton.

The most important question is not whether or not to support Clinton, but what to do in the long run. What happens on the morning after the November general election? Regardless of whether Clinton or Trump win, America needs a strong and independent Left.

A number of organisations already see themselves as being at the heart of such a Left, including Democracy for America, the Working Families Party, MoveOn, and Democratic Socialists of America. All of them are organising and recruiting new members.

Whatever happens next, this much is clear: Bernie Sanders' campaign has changed American politics beyond recognition. Opportunities for the Left have been created which never existed before.

**I for one cannot remember a more exciting time for the American Left.**

\* Eric Lee is the founder of LabourStart and an activist with the London4Bernie campaign

# Connolly

Part eight of Michael Johnson's series on the life and politics of James Connolly. The rest of the series can be found online at [bit.ly/connollyseries](http://bit.ly/connollyseries)

While the Home Rule crisis raged in Ulster, the southern Irish labour movement was about to engage in a class battle of unprecedented militancy. Connolly, along with Jim Larkin, would be at the centre of events during the 1913 Dublin Lock-Out.

In the years leading up to the outbreak of the First World War, Great Britain was convulsed by an unprecedented wave of syndicalist-inspired strike action known as the "Great Unrest". Dockers and railway workers took prolonged strike action and, inspired by ideas of working-class solidarity, much of the unrest took the form of unofficial strike action in sympathy with other groups of workers, bursting the knell of bureaucratised trade union structures.

Larkin and Connolly's ITGWU was part of this wave of class militancy, and the Dublin Lock-Out of 1913 looms large as the longest and most bitter dispute of the period.

In the years of the Great Unrest, Connolly had succeeded in organising the young women mill workers and the dockers in Belfast, while in Dublin the Jacob's biscuit factory, the foundry workers of Wexford and the railways also came under auspices of the ITGWU.

## STRIKE

**As Connolly wrote: "The ITGWU up and down the docks preached most energetically the doctrine of the sympathetic strike, and the doctrine was readily assimilated by the dockers and carters.**

"It brought the union into a long and bitter struggle along the quays, a struggle which cost it thousands of pounds, imperiled its very existence, and earned for it the bitterest hatred of every employer and sweater in the city, every one of whom swore they would wait their chance to 'get even with Larkin and his crew'."

To get even, the bosses coalesced around the figure of William Martin Murphy, whose Dublin United Tramways Company was a major target of Larkin's organising drive. Murphy, a multi-millionaire who made his fortune in the rail and tramways of west Africa and south America, owned the Irish Independent newspaper, Dublin's Imperial Hotel and was the founder of the Dublin Employers' Federation in 1911 for the "mutual protection and indemnity of all employers of labour in Dublin."

He laid down the gauntlet to the ITGWU, declaring that if it tried to organise the Tramways "it will be the Waterloo of Mr. Larkin." On 21 August 1913, Larkin dismissed around 100 workers for trying to join the union and issued an ultimatum: the union or your jobs.

The union struck back. Timed to coincide with the Dublin Horse Show, the workers walked off the trams and appealed to the working-class of Dublin for support. Con-

# Connolly and the Dublin lockout



Connolly recounted that when workers were faced with Murphy's ultimatum, "in every shop, factory and sweating hell-hole in Dublin, as the agreement is presented they march out with pinched faces, threadbare clothes and miserable footgear, but with high hopes, undaunted spirit, and glorious resolve shining out of their eyes."

Both sides steeled themselves, and Connolly was recalled from Belfast to help prepare the workers' for battle. Meetings were organised all across Dublin, with a plan to hold a mass rally on 31 August. The state stepped in and banned the meeting. Larkin and four other union leaders are arrested and then bailed.

The morning before the planned rally, Connolly too was arrested for calling upon the workers to arm themselves. Upon receiving a jail sentence for three months, Connolly declared a hunger strike and was freed in a week.

Despite the threat of being arrested on sight, Larkin announced that the planned on O'Connell Street will go ahead. With the help of Constance Markiewicz, Larkin disguised himself as an elderly clergyman and booked a room in Murphy's Imperial Hotel. Appearing on the hotel balcony, Larkin ripped off his beard, to the roars of the assembled workers as he began to speak.

Larkin was arrested once again, and the police sprang into action, hurling themselves at the crowd at the bosses' behest, truncheons drawn, in an orgy of state violence. Around five hundred workers are hospitalised and the employers declare a general lock out.

The Bolshevik leader Lenin, wrote at the time that: "The police have positively gone wild; drunken policemen assault peaceful workers, break into houses, torment the aged, women and children...People are thrown into prison for making the most peaceful speeches. The city is like an armed camp."

At this point, the union's headquarters in Liberty Hall were turned into a hub for wel-

fare, and the British TUC sent two shipments of food. By now, the workers were beginning to attract support from leading intellectual and cultural figures such as Yeats and George Bernard Shaw, and future leaders of the Rising, Padraig Pearse and the old Fenian Tom Clarke. Arthur Griffith, on the other hand, was bitterly opposed to the workers.

As hunger began to bite, the British suffragist and socialist Dora Montefiore organised a scheme on October to have the children of starving Dublin workers looked after in Britain. The Catholic Church siding, as ever, with the forces of oppression, whipped up an hysterical campaign against the proposal, denouncing the plot to "kidnap" good Catholic children and expose them to the malevolence of English Protestants.

It was decided instead to send some of the children to Catholic homes in Belfast. Montefiore recalled how, when she reached the train station with Larkin's sister and fellow union organiser Delia Larkin:

"At one end of the platform, in front of the compartment into which the parents were attempting to get their children, there was a compact, shouting, gesticulating crowd of Hibs. In the centre of the crowd was the little party of children and parents, and among them were the priests, who were talking, uttering threats against the parents, and forbidding them to send their children to Protestant homes. Some of the women were upbraiding the priests for allowing the children to starve in Dublin; and according to an American paper, whose correspondent was on the platform, 'one woman slapped the face of a priest who was attempting to interfere'."

When Archbishop of Dublin, William Joseph Walsh, wrote an open letter condemning Montefiore's scheme, Connolly angrily denounced the Archbishop, writing to him that if he was "as solicitous about the poor bodies of those children as we know you to be about their souls" then he would call on the bosses to negotiate an end to the strike. Connolly immediately suspended free meals

at Liberty Hall, referring people instead to ask the Archbishop. The point was made. Catholic aid organisations were flooded, forcing Walsh to issue an appeal for funds and a settlement of the dispute.

On 27 October, Larkin was jailed for sedition and on 1 November, Connolly addressed a meeting of 10,000 people at London's Albert Hall. Chaired by George Lansbury, the meeting also heard from the revolutionary socialist suffragist Sylvia Pankhurst, and was one of the factors which led to Sylvia's expulsion from the increasingly bourgeois Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU).

Connolly called for everyone to vote against the Liberal Government in the upcoming by-elections until Larkin was freed. The Liberal majority was substantially reduced in Lithlington and the Liberals lost Reading. Lloyd George commented: "There are explanations, the most prominent of which is, probably, Jim Larkin." Larkin was released soon afterwards.

In one other respect the Lock-Out displayed the advanced level of working-class solidarity in Dublin. Since September of 1913, the idea of working-class armed self-defence had been gaining popularity. The violence of the police and the scabs during the Lock-Out made it a practical necessity.

In October, the workers formed the Irish Citizens' Army (ICA) as a union militia for the defence of meetings and pickets, armed largely with hurley-sticks. In the class struggle, the workers learned how the right to freedom of association is not handed down, but is guaranteed only when they are willing to defend it for themselves.

Connolly wrote how "three men had been killed, and one young Irish girl murdered by a scab, and nothing was done to bring the assassins to justice. So since justice did not exist for us, since the law instead of protecting the rights of the workers was an open enemy, and since the armed forces of the Crown were unreservedly at the disposal of the enemies of labour, it was resolved to create our own

army to secure our rights, to protect our members, and to be a guarantee of our own free progress....

"An armed organisation of the Irish working class is a phenomenon in Ireland. Hitherto the workers of Ireland have fought as parts of the armies led by their masters, never as members of an army officered, trained, and inspired by men of their own class. Now, with arms in their hands, they propose to steer their own course, to carve their own future. Neither Home Rule, nor the lack of Home Rule, will make them lay down their arms...."

As demands for a general strike grew, following an appeal for support from Connolly and Larkin, the British trade union leaders called a special meeting on 9 December in Farringdon Hall, London. Connolly presented the case for holding out further, but the bureaucrats acted to suppress the Irish workers' militant struggle. Larkin's condemnation of the British union leaders provoked howls of outrage, and the TUC rejected further support for the Dublin workers, effectively starving of them of the funds needed to continue.

As 1914 dawned, workers began to drift back to work without having signed a repudiation of the union. The union leaders prepared an organised retreat to conserve the union's organisation and prevent more widespread blacklisting.

## HEIGHT

**As the Dublin Relief Fund was exhausted, Connolly recalled in 'The Isolation of Dublin' in February 1914 that for "the first days and weeks of the struggle, the working classes of Great Britain attained to the height of moral grandeur expressed in that idea, all labour stood behind Dublin, and Dublin rejoiced."**

However, as the strike went on, "we asked for the isolation of the capitalists of Dublin, and for answer the leaders of the British labour movement proceeded calmly to isolate the working class of Dublin."

He wrote bitterly that "the working class unity of the first days of the Dublin fight was sacrificed in the interests of sectional officialism. The officials failed to grasp the opportunity offered to them to make a permanent reality of the union of working class forces brought into being by the spectacle of rebellion, martyrdom and misery exhibited by the workers of Dublin. All England and Scotland rose to it; working class officialdom and working class rank and file alike responded to the call of inspiration; it would have raised us all upward and onward towards our common emancipation. But sectionalism, intrigues and old-time jealousies damned us in the hour of victory, and officialdom was the first to fall to the tempter."

**"And so we Irish workers must go down into Hell, bow our backs to the lash of the slave driver, let our hearts be seared by the iron of his hatred, and instead of the sacramental wafer of brotherhood and common sacrifice, eat the dust of defeat and betrayal. Dublin is isolated."**

# Students: new openings, new dangers

## THE LEFT

By Michael Elms

**The election of Malia Bouattia — the left candidate for President of the National Union of Students (NUS) — earlier this year has created opportunities for the student left. But also dangers. This article spells out those dangers.**

For many years, politics in the NUS has been defined by a ruling Blairite right wing, which negotiates minor concessions from Vice Chancellors and government, while accepting defeat in advance on the big issues: fees, soaring rents, marketisation.

The main body of the soft left in the NUS leadership has tended to organise itself as a clique within various committees, and regarded its purpose as winning office and prestige for other "lefts", rather than organising struggles. It has trimmed its politics to reflect this goal.

The preoccupations of the NUS soft left revolve around demonstrating adherence to this or that article of faith, or winking out admissions of ideological impurity in factional opponents: in ways that are simply bewildering to outside observers, to say nothing of being politically regressive.

A case in point would be the decision of an NUS soft-left Full Time Officer to "no platform" LGBT rights campaigner Peter Tatchell, in support of which the rest of the NUS left closed ranks.

The politics of the NUS soft left invariably focus on soft targets and tend to rely on administrative action. Bans on leftists with bad — or even controversial, or potentially-upsetting — ideas take precedence over struggles against right-wing bigotry.

Solidarity with the Palestinians degenerates into a competition between activists and officers within this narrow circle to demonstrate the most-blinded adherence to the politics of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign: campaigns to ban Jewish-Israeli academics from an institution, or disrupt the meetings of leftwing Jewish group Yachad. Howling down "Zionists" is

viewed as an adequate substitute for solidarity with the Palestinians: after all, it provides more opportunities for noisily signalling one's "activist credentials".

As we have previously noted, on the subject of this pseudo-leftism:

"The left majority on NUS NEC has repeatedly discredited itself by taking ridiculous positions — to take one example, voting down support for Palestinian workers fighting Israeli bosses in Israel's settlements, on the grounds that this would supposedly legitimise the occupation..."

"On the issue of free speech and organisation on campus, which has wracked the student movement this year, the dominant NUS left has mostly been on the wrong side, promoting the idea that suppression of the right to speak and organise is central to challenging oppression and bad ideas.

## PART

### **"NUS has rightly campaigned against the Prevent agenda, but done so in part by promoting the right-wing Islamist campaign Cage."**

"It has helped educate a left where the idea that the SWP, say, or Germaine Greer, should be banned from speaking is not untypically combined with positive assessment of an organisation, Cage, whose central leaders admire the Taliban.

"Almost everyone in NUS is in favour of support for the Palestinian struggle. But the unthinking 'anti-Zionism' which now dominates is a political culture medium for anti-semitism..."

"Malia Bouattia is representative of all these problems. Her record is defined not so much by being a leader of struggles as a spokesperson for these kinds of political ideas and positions."

The politics here is reactionary: but also the method is unserious and performative, more concerned with manoeuvres and denunciations within a small circle than addressing political problems rationally. Put simply: to many students, including left-wing students, the culture, preoccupations and language of the dominant left wing in NUS are bewildering.



Little wonder, then, that the campaigns to disaffiliate local students' unions from the NUS which rightwingers have launched in recent weeks have met with so much success: Hull, Newcastle, Loughborough and Lincoln University students' unions have voted to disaffiliate from NUS since Bouattia's election. The case to remain can't succeed if it is based on trying to rally support to the positions of the dominant soft left faction. Rather, to fight off right wing disaffiliation attempts, the NUS needs to prove to students the worth of a national organisation: and the student movement's left wing needs to slough off the reactionary and illiberal ideas in the Bouattia faction.

How can the new NUS prove its worth? The new leadership of the NUS has an opportunity to mobilise much wider support to force back the government's program for NHS cuts and privatisation across the board.

At University College London, students organised a rent strike this academic year, protesting against extortionate rents, building noise and rat infestation. 238 students won £400,000 from management: effectively a whole term's rent each. Profit-gouging rents in university halls and private student accommodation are not limited to London. UCL's Cut the Rents campaign already offers an example: NUS's leaders should take up the question of rents and organise a drive for rent strikes elsewhere in the UK. The NUS should issue a nationally unifying demand for a £100/week rent ceiling.

At Manchester University, students have

launched a campaign of direct action, public meetings and demonstrations against management plans to sack catering staff, and cut pay for others. They point out that cutting just two senior management roles could pay for a living wage for all staff. The NUS should follow the lead of students at Manchester, and promote militant student action in defence of campus workers in the pay and job disputes that constantly flare up throughout the sector.

Previous NUS leaderships, where they have addressed the issue of students in work at all, have effectively reduced the issue of organising students in work to a matter of marketing union membership as if it was just an extra discount card. NUS should push its activists to run a real campaign of unionisation amongst working students, especially in Further Education, taking the lead from such campaigns as Hungry for Justice in the UK, or Supersize My Pay in New Zealand, which organise young workers in the service sector.

And in fact the first port of call for organising students in work is students who are employed by their students' unions! NUS should "civilise the sector", with a drive for the living wage and union recognition for employees of students' unions.

NUS conference 2016 voted for a campaign to disrupt the National Student Survey, as the centrepiece of a campaign to prevent the implementation of the government's proposed Teaching Excellence Framework. This was a strategy promoted by the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts. To work, it will need the NUS leadership to be a determined advocate for the campaign, winning over teams of student union officers and organising public meetings to discuss the plan up and down the country.

## DANGER

### **"There is a danger now that under Malia Bouattia NUS could be turned in a direction which is advertised as "left wing", and thought of by its leaders as "left wing", but which is in fact regressive."**

That is what will happen if the new NUS leaders, for example, campaign to get Cage leader Moazzam Begg speaking on all campuses, and then organise large protests against the likely refusal of some university administrations and student unions to allow Begg to speak. We do not favour bans on Begg speaking, but we do favour protests and denunciations when he speaks, and it will be a regressive move if promotion of a pro-Taliban speaker is made into the test case for free speech on campuses.

The tone and direction of such a Begg campaign would almost certainly go together with indifference to or positive support for other and bigger suppressions of free speech and critical dialogue on campuses.

Equally, it will be a regressive move if the new NUS leaders campaign energetically to get universities to break links with Israeli academia and to hound students of Israeli origin off campuses.

The student left needs to cast off the confused inheritance of a long period of inactivity, and think big. It needs to set its sights on bold and militant action to assert social need above profit, defend democratic rights on campus, and take an approach to international questions which is rational, and based in solidarity, rather than pseudo-left posturing.

**That is the standard by which the new generation of NUS leaders should be judged.**

# Why is Moazzam Begg speaking at Marxism?

By Michael Elms

**The Socialist Workers' Party organise an annual festival, "Marxism". Although somewhat reduced in size after the SWP split in 2013 over an alleged cover-up of sexual assault committed by a leading member, the Marxism festival is still one of the largest regular events of the UK far left.**

Unfortunately, the event showcases everything that is wrong, un-Marxist, and self-defeating about the politics of much of the far left in the UK.

This year's opening rally for Marxism festival is entitled "The fight against racism, austerity and war".

Some may baulk at being lectured on anti-racism by a group which campaigned for a Leave vote in the European referendum. But that's not the worst problem with the session.

One of the headline speakers is Moazzam

Begg: an outspoken supporter of the Taliban.

Moazzam Begg was born in Birmingham in 1968. In 2001, he moved his family to Afghanistan. He has said that he did this because he supported the Taliban and their regime. In his autobiography, he writes: "I wanted to live in an Islamic state — one that was free from the corruption and despotism of the rest of the Muslim world... The Taliban were better than anything Afghanistan has had in the past 25 years." He also writes that he thought that the Taliban had made "modest progress — in social justice and in upholding pure, old-style Islamic values forgotten in many Islamic countries".

Before he moved to Afghanistan, however, Begg had been an activist for extreme-right religious movements for nearly a decade. In his autobiography, he recounts how he attended a jihadist training camp in 1993. This camp was run, in part, by the Pakistani organisation Jamaat-i-Islami, an

extreme right group, some of whose leaders are on trial for war crimes committed against Bangladeshis in the Bangladesh War of Independence.

Begg's autobiography recounts how, after an unsuccessful attempt to become a jihadist fighter in Chechnya, Begg opened and ran the Maktabah al Ansar bookshop in Birmingham. This bookshop was an important centre for the distribution of jihadist literature in the UK, in particular selling books by the al-Qaeda leaders Abdullah Azzam, Osama bin Laden and Ayman al Zawahiri. Although Begg claims subsequent, limited, criticism of the Taliban, he has never renounced his jihadist past.

**In what universe is a person so implicated with religious fascism a good representative of "the fight against racism, austerity and war"?**

• More on Cage:  
[www.workersliberty.org/node/25450](http://www.workersliberty.org/node/25450)

# A veteran of the 1939-40 debate

Herman Benson, a veteran of the 1939-40 split in Trotskyism and a founding member of the Workers Party, reviews *The two Trotskyisms confront Stalinism* edited by Sean Matgamna. The first of two parts.

When the Stalin-Hitler pact triggered World War Two in 1939, and Soviet troops occupied half of Poland, and then invaded Finland, the Socialist Workers Party in the United States was plunged into crisis.

Consistent with its longtime policy, a majority of the party called for an "unconditional defence of the Soviet Union" and declared its support of the Red Army in any war with the forces of any capitalist regime. But a big SWP minority group broke with Trotskyist tradition and denounced the Soviet action as a reprehensible "imperialist" invasion.

The dispute, which became increasingly bitter, quickly split the SWP. In the months and years that followed the dispute escalated to raise basic questions of Marxism and of Trotskyism.

The ideological battle of those 75 years ago, may be ignored and forgotten here in America. But not in Britain where a small socialist group, the Alliance for Workers Liberty, has massively resurrected it in volumes under the overall title *The Fate of the Russian Revolution*, introduced by able informative essays by Sean Matgamna, the series editor. The first volume, which I have not seen, has already appeared in over 600 pages. The concluding third volume is still to come.

Volume two, *The two Trotskyisms confront Stalinism* reprints the main documents that led up to the split. And much more. You can, for example, read the full text of the 1950 debate between Earl Browder, the defrocked leader of the US Communist Party, and Max Shachtman, leader of the Workers Party. A 117-page introduction by the editor puts it all in context. (For his editorial convenience, he refers to the defencist majority as the "orthodox" Trotskyists and the dissident minority as "heterodox," although these labels were not in use at the time.)

Workers Liberty seems to have been a mildly "orthodox" Trotskyist group in Britain until it was troubled by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1980 as we were in 1939/40 by the invasion of Poland and Finland. To me, who lived through that debate, it is nostalgia. But to the Alliance, it's a living, breathing thing with deep lessons for socialists today. The editor's sympathies are implicit in the time he spent to study and compile this mammoth collection of competing declarations and explicit in his introductory essay. In 1939, he would have been a "heterodox" partisan.

I found this book stimulating, fascinating, but I admit to a bias. Back in 1939 I was a 24-years old recent recruit to the Trotskyist cause, an outspoken "heterodox" in the SWP, and later a Workers Party zealot. Reading it now, stirs stagnant blood. Still, those who were not there — any thoughtful socialist — should find it absorbing and provoking.

For Workers' Liberty, which revisits this old dispute, it is not intended as an academic revival of a neglected and forgotten episode in socialist history but as an important guide to understanding current events, a compass to orient a modern generation of social radicals.

In particular, a study of those competing views, Workers' Liberty feels, provides "An antidote for the persisting residue of Stalinism" in the labour movement. Readers may

feel a certain vague visceral agreement with that objective even though it is not clearly posed. What "residue" of Stalinism do they reject? A more pointed explanation would be helpful. Here in the States, leftists may not be concerned with such a question. In Britain, Workers' Liberty makes a contribution by reviving it.

Reading this book has prompted me to rethink the old ideological battle and to remember where I came from. Insofar as Stalinism was an ideological system that denigrated the idea of democracy in the labour movement, yes, a close study of these documents can be an antidote to a residue of Stalinism. But now the chief lesson lies in the broader quintessential role of democracy in society. To socialists here the idea might come across like a commonplace. But it was lost in an era when the radical Leninist left denigrated bourgeois democracy and preached the superiority of a "socialist" democracy — whatever that might be — which would replace it.

For me, looking back, the key contribution of the "heterodox" Trotskyists was to clear the way back to democracy for revolutionary Marxists. But they performed this service not explicitly or robustly but by implication.

At the time the world had just exploded in war. The SWP, with its three or four thousand members, was the major affiliate of the Fourth International, the organisation founded by Leon Trotsky in what ultimately turned out to be a Quixotic effort to supplant the communist Third International. Then exiled in Mexico, Trotsky was more than a mentor to his international and to the SWP. By his writings, his leadership of the Red Army during the civil war, his historic role in the Russian revolution of 1917, his trenchant analysis — and denunciation — of the Stalinist regime, his unwavering revolutionary will, he dominated the Trotskyist movement intellectually, politically, and even organisationally.

## TROTSKY

**Trotsky's position on the Soviet Union was complex, evolving — and confusing.**

Under the Stalin regime, he charged, Soviet Russia had been turned into a virtual slave state for workers, one of the most repressive regimes in history. However, unlike in the surrounding capitalist societies, property in the Soviet Union remained nationalised. Despite Stalin, he argued, nationalised property was the still-remaining achievement of the 1917 workers revolution and the economic basis for a transition to socialism. As long as property remained nationalised, he insisted, the Soviet Union had to be viewed as a workers' state. But because of the regime's repressive, exploitative, anti-worker policies, it was — he said — a degenerated worker state. Degenerated, that is, from its purer days of 1917.

Because it was an anti-capitalist society, Trotsky was convinced that the Soviet Union was in constant danger of attack by capitalist/imperialist powers. That expectation was shared by most radicals of the day: Stalinists, Trotskyists, moderate socialists. Trotsky's programme called for the "unconditional defence of the Soviet Union," not "conditioned," that is, by any demand for internal reform of the regime. In that conception, defence of the Soviet Union against capitalist attack was the defence of its property nationalisation. But the outbreak of war shattered unified opinion in the SWP.

By agreement with Hitler, Soviet troops marched into Poland, invaded Finland, and later forcibly annexed three Baltic states. Trotsky and a majority of the SWP leadership would not be moved. Convinced that the So-



After the invasion, Soviet cavalry parade in Lwów

viet invasions were minor episodes in the regime's defensive manoeuvres to protect itself against future inevitable capitalist attack, they persisted in proclaiming the need for unconditional defence. But a substantial minority of the party leadership and membership would not go along.

At the time, the dissidents did not challenge the notion of Russia as a degenerated workers' state. Nor did they reject the legitimacy of calling for defence of the Soviet union if — if — it actually came under attack. But, they held — with passion — that reality could not be ignored: the Soviet invasion had to be condemned as a repressive, imperialist act. In the intense internal battle that followed, the differences were deepened, intellectualised, sharpened. The SWP split, and the minority formed the Workers Party. That was 1940.

The editor of this book writes in 2015, "The great Stalinist expansionary wave that ran through the 1940s until it broke in Afghanistan, in Russia's colonial war of the 1980s, was revolutionary against the bourgeoisie but also counter-revolutionary against the working class and against all elements of bourgeois democracy and political liberty, not to speak of socialism." This could be a fairly accurate statement of the position taken by some of the "heterodox" in the opening stages of the debate in 1939. Later, however, once they rejected the concept of a degenerated workers' state based on nationalised property, they would hardly characterise any Stalinist takeover as "revolutionary." (Aloof scholars, perhaps, in some cold sociological sense, might do so, but without any progressive connotations.)

The SWP debate opened on what seemed like a sharp but limited difference. The majority faction was formally led by James Cannon, SWP leader. But it was Trotsky himself who took on its defence; Max Shachtman led the opposition. Their writings, voluminously reprinted here, still make absorbing reading for me. So it will be for the specialist in radical history. Non-academic radicals will find much of this intriguing, but some of it is hard-going. Here were a few debaters with a few thousand political followers who wrote as though what they said and did could have a noticeable impact on world events. That was an illusion. But for the publishers of these volumes, a study of these ideological exchanges is still illuminating.

In a forthright denunciation of the Russian military intervention into Poland and Finland as an imperialist invasion, the "hetero-

dox" rejected any call for defence of the Soviet Union. The orthodox majority reiterated the traditional Trotskyist defencist line unchanged — even unchangeable; but in the context of a brutal war, its explanation took a serpentine twist: not willing to justify the invasion itself, the heterodox majority "explained" it as an incidental manoeuvre in the Soviet's preparation for defence against the inevitable capitalist attack; we might deplore it; nevertheless, the entry of Soviet troops gave "a bureaucratic impulse" to social revolution. Here as in any military conflict with a capitalist power, the orthodox insisted, we call for a defence of the Soviet union.

The debate quickly escalated and deepened.

After Trotsky was assassinated in August 1940 — the minority had already split away — the SWP endowed Russia's nationalised property with disembodied, mystical, spiritual powers. The Russian masses' courageous defence against the Nazis as at Stalingrad, the SWP declared, was inspired by an impassioned dedication to their nationalised property. The myth of that enduring love was punctured decades later when property was denationalised. At its moment of crisis, no one rose in its defence, not the working class, no one; it expired unwept, unhonoured, unsung.

East European states taken over by Russian troops were baptised by the SWP as "deformed" workers' states, a brand new category. (Never having "degenerated" from any pristine state; they were born as monsters.) A workers' state imposed by military conquerors! With that creation, the Marxist conception of the self-liberation of the working class evaporated.

Freed from orthodoxy, the Workers Party went on to reject the fundamental premise of the majority's — and Trotsky's — position: that the persistence of its nationalised property meant the continuation of Russia as a workers' state, "degenerated" but still a workers' state. From the very beginning of the dispute, a rare few were troubled by that idea: James Burnham (who resigned from the WP upon its formation) and Joe Carter (who remained as one of its leaders). But it was Max Shachtman who created the ideological basis for a fundamentally new approach, one which freed the movement from even the last taint of Stalinism; his principal writings on the subject are published here.

Shachtman begins with a description of Russian society that was shared by every Trotskyist tendency, a view he presented graphically in his debate with Earl Browder (full text reprinted in this volume). Russia, he argued, was an oppressive, exploiting society in which the working class was reduced to virtual slavery to the advantage of the ruling bureaucracy. In this, he was in complete agreement with Trotsky who considered the Stalin regime one of the most oppressive in history.

**All that was 75 years ago. Not only the Stalin regime, but also its nationalised property are now historical dust. Who except some ossified Stalinist, can look back at the tyrannical Russia of those days as any species of workers' state? How could Trotsky, so brilliant, have clung so long to his theory of a workers' state (and, with his powerful powers of persuasion, convinced so many of us to go along)? The answer, I think, lies in his tragic personal history.**

• *The Two Trotskyisms confront Stalinism* can be purchased for £23 including postage, from [bit.ly/twotrotskyisms](http://bit.ly/twotrotskyisms)

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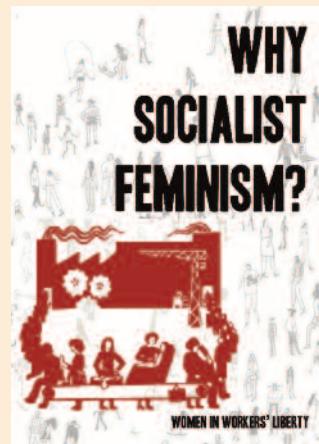
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# Work, time, and

**Moishe Postone, a Marxist writer based at the University of Chicago and author of *Time, Labour, and Social Domination*, and *Critique du féthique-capital: Le capitalisme, l'antisémitisme et la gauche*, was in London in May, and discussed capital and labour with Martin Thomas from Solidarity.**

MT: Your book *Time, Labour, and Social Domination* proposes a Marxist theory focused on the critique of labour (as labour is defined in capitalist society), and you contrast that to a critique of capitalist society from the point of view of labour.

Logically, therefore, you discuss chapter 15 of Capital, where Marx comes to the culmination of his analysis of labour in capitalist society. But there is surprisingly little about chapter 15 in your book, given that it is the chapter about labour as it is defined in industrialised capitalism.

And if you look at other schools of interpretation – the operaisti, for example – who focus on chapter 15, they reach, in a way, exactly the opposite conclusion. You say that capitalism is the self-movement of capital. They say that society is the self-movement of the working class within the capitalist framework.

So why is it that the central chapter, which you focus on, is discussed relatively little? And why is it that other writers who have focussed on Marx's discussion of labour come to the diametrically opposite conclusion?

MP: I think the operaisti and I have very different understandings of what Marx's categories mean. I don't think that they are only categories of exploitation. I think that they are categories of social forms of domination. And those forms of domination go beyond the domination of the bourgeoisie over other class, because they dominate the bourgeoisie as well, though of course the bourgeoisie benefit enormously from it.

Previous ruling classes were not dominated. There was no-one dominating the aristocracy – they could basically do what they wanted until somebody else stopped them. I think that the operaisti, by putting everything in the bag of the labouring classes, essentially dispense with that level of Marxist analysis and therefore, as I read it, they dispense with his idea of the trajectory of capital.

The trajectory of capital for them simply is a matter of the success of class struggle, or its lack of success. So for them the crisis of the seventies, from which we still have not recovered, was a crisis that was brought on by the working class.

I disagree with that because I think that they have no notion of valorisation difficulties other than wage struggle. Also, the enormous transformations of labour have occurred, and I think the operaisti hold the working class to be constant.

The chapter on accumulation [ch. 25] in Marx's Capital volume 1 – which I didn't write about, though I should have – arguably, is about the growing superfluity of a great deal of labour. A lot of people read the chapter on accumulation with an idea of the industrial reserve army of labour, and see that as simply a cyclical affair that allows capital to keep wages down by having a reserve which varies over the course of the business

cycle.

That isn't false, but I think it is only one dimension of a longer term problem. With the rise of constant capital, variable capital becomes less and less important, so the logical tendency is for the industrial reserve army to grow, rather than being just cyclical, and for that process to produce a crisis of labour.

I don't mean a crisis that causes the whole edifice to come crashing down. I think we are experiencing a crisis of labour right now. We are getting the hollowing out of working society.

Someone like Sanders in the United States is making a serious error when he argues that the misère of the working class in the United States is because of faulty trade agreements. The trade agreements have certainly contributed. They have contributed in ways that people focussing on the American workers alone do not see. They have wreaked havoc in other parts of the world such as Mexican farmers, once cheap American maize was allowed into that country. But Sanders completely underestimates the effects of mechanisation.

At least he is trying to give a socio-economic explanation for the difficulties, whereas Trump is giving simply a xenophobic and racist one. Both of them they are trying to deal with a crisis of labour, and thus acquiring many votes in traditional heartland working-class areas.

I have recently been working in Vienna. There is a chance that the Austrians are going to elect a neo-nazi as President, this man Hofer [in the event Hofer was narrowly defeated]. So I asked someone about what happened to Red Vienna, and they said that the inner districts of the city are Red-Green – the Social-Democrats, the Reds, have been weaker for a while.

## CRISIS

The older arrondissements, what they call the Bezirks, are Red-Blue, and Blue is the colour of the neo-Nazis. And there is a crisis, I think, of the industrial working class.

But this isn't a secular long-term increase in unemployment, for example. The long-term average level of unemployment rose over the 1970s, but since then unemployment has gone up and down with no clear rising trend. In the USA, for example, unemployment is actually lower now than in the 1970s.

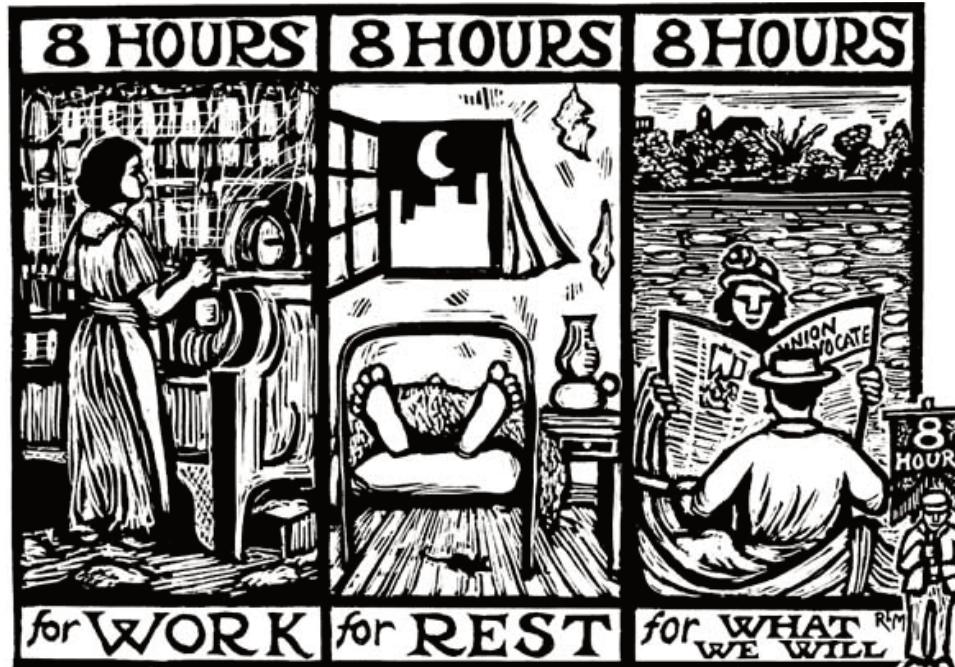
That is because the Americans don't count anyone who has been unemployed for more than 18 months, and they don't count the enormous prison population.

In the UK, too, though. And the level of workforce participation is higher than it was.

I don't see a secular long-time rise in unemployment, or decline in workforce participation, but I do see a long-term trend of displacements of labour, in a way that, I think, obliges us to look again at how Marx has conceived of modern industry and the changes that have happened since.

You have a lot of people in jobs which are very poor quality jobs: not even making things, but watching things, or cleaning things, or looking after things. They are paid a lot lower. The work

# the working class



itself may be less physically exhausting, but it pushes you down in society in a way that the more arduous work that it replaced maybe didn't.

Marx did not foresee this transformation. He saw machine-minders as the growing sector of the working class. But people in these expanding job areas are not machine-minders. They are cleaners, security guards, low-paid service workers. This is a shift, but it's not just a shift towards more and more people becoming unemployed.

Also, Marx was explicit that there is a component of the working class involved in design, repair, people who are technicians within the production process. At the time he is writing, it was numerically insignificant. It is not numerically insignificant now.

So we see three processes going on. The classic process of de-skilling, which goes on all the time, across the board. The process of the displacement of labour into jobs which are about not operating machines, but minding the conditions of the production process. And a continuously-rising mass of jobs which are to do with designing and maintaining the production process, which are generally more-skilled jobs and there is a process of trying to de-skill them. The mass of teachers in schools and universities has increased enormously, for example. And at the same time there is a continuous process of trying to standardise, homogenise, de-skill. If there is a crisis there, there are three distinct processes going on; and none is quite a question of labour becoming superfluous. Certainly in Europe, the general trend is a rise in the participation rate.

Things are being cut back and automated. Even in universities. I have no idea what the figures are like here, and probably they are not nearly as bad. Something like 60% or 70% of all teaching at the university level in the USA is done by what we call adjuncts. At the same time, there is a very strong push towards MOOCs [Massive Open Online Courses]. Not very successful so far, but give it time.

This was first developed, to the best of my knowledge, in Canada. You are asked to develop a course to be put online. That course then belongs to the university, which has a patent on it. They can hire anyone they like to teach that course. Adjuncts are hired. The

## JOBS

I am told that a lot of these jobs are going to be computerised in the coming years.

In the so-called second industrial revolution, where there was a massive displacement of people from some spheres accompanied by a massive pulling-in of huge numbers of people into other spheres, but that won't happen now. You may still get an expansion of janitorial staff, but those jobs are becoming fairly mechanised too.

I don't think we are moving automatically in any sense towards a labour-less society, but the idea that the working class was going to globally expand, and that there would be basically two classes, a small elite and a huge working class — that model no longer fits the world. It could be argued on the basis of Volume 3 of *Capital* that Marx envisioned the expansion of what we would call the white-collar middle class.

There is a passage in [Marx's] *Theories of Surplus Value* on the expansion of the middle class. But part of the picture is that much of what used to be thought of as the white-collar middle class is now working-class. And it is a fact that the industrial working class, and the working class more broadly defined, has been growing. Look at China, for example...

Industrial expansion in China stopped in about 2005. But OK, industry will expand in Bangladesh. So it's a rolling process...

And it's got a good few places to roll on to.

Absolutely. So I don't think this is linear, and I am not predicting the imminent end of labouring society. First there will be proletarianisation of large parts of the world. Quite a while ago I was struck by a sentence in Mandel's *Late Capitalism*, where he wrote that after 1945, far more capital was invested by metropolitan countries in other metropolitan countries than in the previously-colonised world: he wrote that "the only thing worse than being exploited is not being exploited".

Having discussed the question of the critique of labour versus the critique of capitalist society from the point of view of labour, you identify this question with the question of the revolutionary role of the working class. The way you make the argument is to say that emancipation cannot be conceived of as the self-realisation of labour.

But the way I take Marx's argument is that he is nowhere talking about the self-realisation of labour, but the self-abolition of labour. In the 1844 Manuscripts, he is talking about the critique of crude communism, and the worst he has to say about it is "The category of the worker is not done away with, but extended to all men... The community is only a community of labour, and equality of wages paid out by communal capital — by the community as the universal capitalist".

One of the sides of the Stalinist corruption of Marxism was to turn it into a glorification of the sort of labour done under capitalism — the more Stakhanovite you are, the more emancipated you are. Marx's argument is that the structural position of the working class tends to give the working class a drive towards self-abolition as a class. It's not that the working class is driven to realise and exalt its activity in labour, but it is driven to revolt against it.

In *Wage-Labour and Capital*, Marx writes that for the worker, life starts outside work. And the worker has a life outside work in a way that previous exploited classes don't have. Marx talks about this as "the civilising tendency of capital".

In chapter 15, Marx says that large-scale capitalist industry has a compulsion to create a working class which is multi-skilled, which is capable of all sorts of jobs, activities, productive functions — and then, to put it into boxes. It has a drive to create people who are adaptable, flexible, multi-skilled and so on, and then have them doing stereotyped things which can be replaced by a machine. And those tendencies which will create a drive to abolish this condition — to replace it by the sharing-out of necessary drudgery on the basis of short hours and good conditions, and a great expansion of free time for free creative activity — rather than to bring it to a culmination.

I think that is what Marx was saying; but I think that most of Marxism has not said that. Not only the Stalinists: I think the social democracy, very understandably, talked about the "dignity of labour" and therefore of the dignity of the activity undertaken by labour.

Marx didn't accord it much dignity. He saw the development as being much more

double-sided: that there was simultaneously a process whereby work is robbed of its intrinsic meaning. And at the same time, workers become historically constituted, as people who have a life outside of labour, and as people who think of themselves as agents. Which is very different than, to the best of my knowledge, than the self-conceptions of other kinds of subaltern populations.

But what does self-abolition mean? I use that term, and I am for it. But it means going beyond labour, and that's very difficult. That's one of the reasons why Marx thought there had to be a political movement and not simply a trade union movement. The limitation of a trade union movement is not simply it's going to sell out but that it's not going to look beyond labour — its job is to defend labour. So how do you go beyond labour, what kind of movement looks beyond labour? Particularly at a time when a lot of workers feel threatened.

I am not sure where such a movement should start. What sort of programmes would one suggest to show that there are other possibilities, rather than clinging on, because now, if you don't cling on, you just become flotsam? So it's very understandable that people are holding on. But I agree with what you say about what Marx said in the early manuscripts, and I think that this remained throughout. A lot of people think that maybe those ideas were in the early manuscripts but later on disappeared.

Your argument is that any conception of the revolutionary role of the working class must be about its self-realisation, and that doesn't follow at all. The structure of capital, the movement of capital, generates, along with a lot of counter-tendencies, a drive in the working class towards self-abolition, to abolish the proletarian condition. That doesn't mean that immediately everybody's going to stop work. The way that Marx frequently sums it up in is simply: the limiting of the working day is not just to give you time to go home and put your feet up; it is to give you more time for free activity. And the idea is that progressively that free activity becomes a much greater productive force than the work itself.

You can see why that idea is just pushed aside by Stalinism.

As for classic social democracy — the typical cadre of classic social democracy was a skilled worker. He or she (mostly he) was a different grade of worker from the machine-minders Marx described in chapter 15 of *Capital* — a skilled worker who took pride in his or her work for actually not very different reasons why medieval craftsmen took pride in their work.

That didn't mean that they couldn't see beyond that, but it was something very close to them, and part of their class feeling against capitalism was: "we know how to do these things and they mess it up, we can do the job properly".

That was a real reason, not a theoretical misunderstanding; but that category of skilled workers is declining.

I agree. Implicit in what I wrote, is that what I regard as traditional Marxism is adequate to its time. And what I am trying to do is to write something that is adequate to a different epoch. It is not simply that I am smarter than Karl Kautsky. This isn't that kind of argument. It's a matter of a historical shift.

I think that limiting the working day is crucial, but that seems to have disappeared from the horizons of almost anybody apart from the French working class.

# Where we stand

Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production.

The capitalists' control over the economy and their relentless drive to increase their wealth causes poverty, unemployment, the blighting of lives by overwork, imperialism, the destruction of the environment and much else.

Against the accumulated wealth and power of the capitalists, the working class must unite to struggle against capitalist power in the workplace and in wider society.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty wants socialist revolution: collective ownership of industry and services, workers' control, and a democracy much fuller than the present system, with elected representatives recallable at any time and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

We fight for trade unions and the Labour Party to break with "social partnership" with the bosses and to militantly assert working-class interests.

**In workplaces, trade unions, and Labour organisations; among students; in local campaigns; on the left and in wider political alliances we stand for:**

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
- A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
- A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
- Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.
- A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression.

Full equality for women, and social provision to free women from domestic labour. For reproductive justice: free abortion on demand; the right to choose when and whether to have children. Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.

- Open borders.
- Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
- Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
- Equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
- Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.

If you agree with us, please take some copies of *Solidarity* to sell — and join us!



## Events

### 26 June — 4 July

Sisters Uncut week of workshops  
285 Rye Lane, London, SE15 4UA  
[bit.ly/291UECQ](http://bit.ly/291UECQ)

### Friday 1 July

Haringey Momentum #KeepCorbyn meeting  
7pm, Kurdish Community Centre, London N4 1HU  
[bit.ly/29br3nj](http://bit.ly/29br3nj)

### Saturday 2 July

Leicester Momentum meeting  
11am, Secular Hall, Leicester, LE1 1WB  
[bit.ly/294tXLo](http://bit.ly/294tXLo)

### Monday 4 July

Hotel workers' branch: What does Brexit mean for hotel workers  
5pm, Unite the union, London, WC1X 8TN  
[bit.ly/294tXLo](http://bit.ly/294tXLo)

### Tuesday 5 July

Teachers' strike  
Across the country  
London rally: [bit.ly/293bqjw](http://bit.ly/293bqjw)

### Wednesday 6 July

Protest at the Chilcot report announcement  
10am, at the QE II conference centre, London, SW1P 3EE  
[bit.ly/2983u1z](http://bit.ly/2983u1z)

### 7-10 July

Ideas for Freedom 2016: Changing Labour, changing politics  
Student Central, Malet Street, London, WC1E 7HY  
[www.workersliberty.org/ideas](http://www.workersliberty.org/ideas)

Got an event you want listing?  
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More online at [www.workersliberty.org](http://www.workersliberty.org) **Workers' Liberty** **@workersliberty**

# We can defeat this coup!

## LABOUR

By **Gerry Bates**

**We can defeat the attempted right-wing coup against Jeremy Corbyn if we move fast and with determination.**

The conspirators have strength in Parliament (how much exactly, we don't know as *Solidarity* goes to press) and a media eager to help them damage Corbyn and the left — but their support among Labour Party members and trade unionists is very limited indeed.

There are various scenarios floating around, but the key thing is to shape the outcome by taking action.

- Join, or organise, demonstrations supporting Corbyn across the country.

- Momentum and other Labour activists are calling emergency meetings to oppose and plan activity to stop the coup. Organise one in your area. At these meetings

move our model resolution on the way forward — see [socialistcampaignforalabourvictory.wordpress.com/2016/06/27/proposal](http://socialistcampaignforalabourvictory.wordpress.com/2016/06/27/proposal)

- Sign and circulate the petition on 38 degrees supporting Corbyn, already signed by over 200,000 people — [you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/a-vote-of-confidence-in-jere-my-corbyn-after-brexit](http://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/a-vote-of-confidence-in-jere-my-corbyn-after-brexit)

And the Momentum statement, signed by almost 50,000, which also helps you email your MP — [labourunited.peoplesmomentum.com](http://labourunited.peoplesmomentum.com)

- Move an emergency motion at your Labour Party branch or CLP (or union branch) — if necessary call or push for an emergency meeting. For a model motion defending Corbyn and arguing to stand firm on migrants' rights and push for the kind of pro-working class policies needed to turn the Brexit tide, see — [socialistcampaignforalabourvictory.wordpress.com/2016/06/26/motionpostref](http://socialistcampaignforalabourvictory.wordpress.com/2016/06/26/motionpostref)

- Defend Corbyn while continuing the political arguments. Fight any accommodation to anti-migrant agitation or for the Labour



Party to retreat on freedom of movement — push for a pro-working class agenda on jobs, homes, services, workers' rights, etc, that can begin to really tackle the social distress on which nationalism has fed.

- Join and recruit people to the Labour Party! If you haven't yet joined, now is the time to do it. If you've joined but not been active, now is the time to get active.

**In particular we need more young people and workers joining and active in the party.**

# Momentum debates anti-semitism

By **Sacha Ismail**

**There were 65 people at the Lewisham Momentum debate on anti-semitism, Israel-Palestine and the left on 20 June, including a fair smattering from outside Lewisham.**

I think the most positive thing about the meeting was that it took place. Despite the world pushing this question on us quite dramatically, there is a distinct lack of genuine discussion about it. There have been relatively few meetings organised about it, and very few indeed — if any — which involve speakers from different points of view.

In the run up to the 20 June event, a number of people on opposite sides of the debate (mainly from outside Lewisham) gave the impression of being quite outraged that it was happening and did various things to undermine it. So in going ahead and making it a success we contributed in a small way to changing the sectarian, anti-discussion culture of the left. Hopefully it provides a model other Momentum, Labour Party and labour movement organisations can learn from.

The three speakers, Marlene Ellis (Momentum Black ConneXions), Rhea Wolfson (left candidate for the Labour Party NEC) and Jon Lansman (Momentum steering committee), were recorded and their speeches should be put online soon, so I won't report what they said blow for blow. In fact, I won't really report the meeting so much as comment on some particular things in the discussion that struck me.

Speaker after speaker talked

about the right to criticise Israel as if this is seriously in doubt. I don't think it is. Some Labour Party members have been suspended for comments in connection to Israel, but not many, and the evidence so far (eg. the reinstatement of Jackie Walker) suggests they will mostly be reinstated (the exceptions being people guilty of really quite blatant anti-semitism, like Vicki Kirby in Woking). That is in contrast to the much larger number of people expelled basically for being an active socialist, many of those cases being so far quite intractable.

## ISRAEL

**In any case, what many speakers at the meeting just refused to deal with was the fact that everyone there was sharply critical of Israel.**

The debate is, or should be, about what criticisms of Israel are useful and productive, rather than damaging, from a left-wing or socialist point of view.

What those of us who support the Palestinians but reject demonisation of Israel said was largely ignored. That was particularly true in the case of Rhea Wolfson — who spoke about why she isn't a Zionist but why Israel has at least in the past been an important part of her identity, as it is for many Jewish people of different views. The reason Rhea was ignored is that she doesn't fit the dominant "left" narrative — this woman is obviously left-wing, supports the Palestinians and doesn't call herself a Zionist; how can it be she disagrees with me about some of the issues here...?

There is a strange contrast with

how Jeremy Corbyn is treated. He argues substantially similar positions to Rhea (and to the AWL) on the issues in dispute — for an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel, against a general boycott of Israeli goods, or an academic boycott, etc. Yet he is lauded, including at the Lewisham meeting, as a great anti-Zionist (ditto Jo Cox — so much for the idea that criticism of Israel is suppressed in the Labour Party), while others with similar views are denounced as Zionist or ignored. Incoherence or opportunism? Probably both.

At least two speakers argued that it is wrong to talk about anti-semitism in connection with Israel, because the Palestinians, as Arabs, are themselves "semites". This is both staggeringly irrational and bad politically. It is a shame to hear these kind of arguments being made!

Another speaker objected to a comrade saying that anti-semitism is disproportionately strong among Muslims in Britain, claiming that to say this is Islamophobic. Others supported that claim. This rejected a strong trend of being in denial about reality, as well as not listening. In fact there is nothing anti-Muslim about recognising facts. It is borne out by plausible opinion polling and widely commented on by liberal and left-wing Muslim writers, for instance the *New Statesman*'s Mehdi Hasan.

**Yet some are willing to say that all "Zionists" are racist just by the fact of self-defining as Zionist (or in some cases, not even self-defining) while refusing to even consider difficult issues about anti-semitism.**

# “We don’t just sell tickets”

Workers at Southern struck again on 21 June in their dispute against “Driver Only Operation” (DOO). One of the strikers spoke to rank-and-file railworkers’ bulletin *Off The Rails*.

The strike is about keeping the role of the guard (conductor) on the train.

People think conductors just sell tickets, but we have safety responsibilities. For example, when a train is in a platform, it’s up to us to close the doors and make sure people don’t get trapped. If I close the doors and give the driver the “tip” to go and the signal is red and the train moves, then the responsibility is on the guard. We also assist visually impaired people on and off the train safely. We are safety critical. Every year we must sit an exam; if we don’t pass, they withdraw our licence.

Southern wants to take away the safety critical element of our job and run trains under “Driver Only Operation” (DOO). DOO would put all the guards’ safety responsibilities onto the drivers, and they have enough to do already. This is also bad for passengers. Southern has announced that, once it has removed guards, people with a disability who require assistance must give 48 hours’ notice before they can travel.

Southern wants to implement its plans by 20 August. Existing guards would have to sign a new contract. We currently work 35 hours a week. Managers brought new draft rosters to show us, which showed us working 38.5 hours. We would be going backwards. We used to work a 40 hour week and the union fought to bring it down to 35. Most importantly, because we wouldn’t be classed as “safety critical” anymore, we would lose our right to the guaranteed legal minimum of 12 hours’ rest between shifts, so we could finish at midnight and find ourselves back at work at 8am the following day. During service disruptions, we



Guards and supporters protested outside Brighton train station

would be expected to work 90 minutes extra.

The RMT industrial action amongst guards has been very solid. Everyone feels so angry that we are not valued. Although Southern sent us letters to warn us that we would lose 48 hours’ money for a 24 hour strike, people still walked out. We’ve had three strikes so far, most recently on 21 June. Support is great in all depots. Even at Selhurst, which will be retained as a conductor depot, guards walked out because they realise it won’t be long before it hits them as well.

## CANCELLATIONS

Managers are announcing that trains are cancelled because staff have gone sick.

They are trying to turn passengers against us. The real reason for cancellations is that most depots are understaffed. Guards have been helping to keep trains running by working rest days. But all good will from the staff has gone. Yesterday, I said I wouldn’t work beyond my time, so a few trains were cancelled.

Southern is not showing signs of backing down — it just wants the union to cave. Aslef balloted drivers after asking Southern how far it plans to extend DOO and the company refused to say. The ballot result was good. But the employers took Aslef to court and got an in-

junction to prevent drivers from taking the industrial action that they had voted for. Now RMT guards are taking our next strike action on our own when we had hoped to be striking alongside the drivers.

But support from the drivers is strong. At Victoria, drivers have raised money to support the guards to keep going out on strike. We look after each other in the depot.

We need a coordinated national strike to defeat DOO. ScotRail guards are the latest to strike. Guards on Merseyrail are in the same predicament: the company wants to get rid of guards and use them as ticket inspectors. On Northern Rail, the RMT has run a great public campaign, “Keep the Guard on the Train”.

The petition in support of keeping guards already has 11,000 signatures. In terms of a political campaign, there is an Early Day Motion in Parliament. We’ve had no Labour Party support on our strike days. Only the Green Party came down to our picket line. Some of my colleagues emailed Sadiq Khan saying “we will be voting for you as London Mayor if you promise to retain us”. He said “yes”.

**TfL is taking over the routes within London that are already DOO. We will have to pressure him to put guards on those routes.**

# Rail strikes spread to Scotland

By Ollie Moore

ScotRail workers struck four times in a week, in the latest of a series of developing disputes against “Driver Only Operation” (DOO).

They struck on 21, 23, 25, and 26 June, as part of a programme of strikes which also includes walkouts on 3, 10, and 17 July.

There were several reported incidents of safety regulations being breached, as unqualified managers were used to cover the work of striking guards.

A document accidentally leaked

by ScotRail management stated that developing a “greater resilience to industrial action” was a motivating factor in their attempt to extend DOO. The RMT union, which organises ScotRail workers, accused the company of union busting.

An RMT statement said: “These documents, issued in error by the company, expose a hidden agenda of union busting, job cuts and attacks on safety that RMT always said was at the heart of this



dispute.

**“They blow apart the company spin that there is no threat and that our action is premature.”**

# UCU strikes target open days

By Charlotte Zalens

The UCU union’s dispute over pay and conditions in Higher Education is continuing over the summer with a wave of rolling strikes across universities.

Protests and strikes are being timed to disrupt university open days. The union is also organising an assessment boycott to start in the Autumn. External examiners are resigning their positions on exam boards.

So far strikes have happened at University of Liverpool, Warwick, Chester, Leeds, Sheffield, Reading, Wolverhampton, and Oxford, and various universities in London.



UCU says that since 2010 the amount spent on staff by universities as a percentage of total income has dropped by 3%. However the total of cash in reserves has rocketed by 72% to over £21bn.

# Tube union considers further strikes

By Ollie Moore

RMT’s National Executive Committee has announced that it is “preparing a ballot matrix” of its members working on London Underground stations, signalling a possible return to industrial action against job cuts.

Several of RMT’s Tube branches had passed resolutions calling for renewed strikes against the impact of “Fit for the Future: Stations”, a programme of cuts which has seen nearly 1,000 frontline posts axed,

and forced regrading for all station staff and mass displacements.

A London Underground worker and RMT rep told *Solidarity*: “This announcement is welcome, and needs to be acted on as soon as possible. Many of us felt that our previous dispute over ‘Fit for the Future’ was settled too early.

**“Declaring a new dispute and building for renewed action could turn the anger station workers feel about the cuts and their consequences into real resistance.”**

# Leon Brumant remembered

By Daniel Randall, RMT London Transport Region Young Members’ Officer (pc)

The RMT London Transport Regional Council and RMT Bakerloo Line branch held an event on 23 June to commemorate the life of Leon Brumant, the Tube worker, socialist, RMT rep, and anti-racist activist who died on 22 April.

The event heard speeches from leading RMT activists and officials, including National President Sean Hoyle and London Transport Regional Organiser John Leach.

Comrades of Leon from beyond the union also attended, along with his mother, sister, and other members of his family.

**Many of the speeches and contributions noted Leon’s struggles with depression, and emphasised the need for the RMT and wider labour movement to do more around issues of mental health.**



**A new badge launched in Leon’s memory at the meeting**

• To read our obituary for Leon, visit: [bit.ly/28X85yp](http://bit.ly/28X85yp)



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### Contact us

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 [solidarity@workersliberty.org](mailto:solidarity@workersliberty.org)

 Write to us: The editor (Cathy Nugent), 20e Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London, SE1 3DG

Solidarity editorial: Cathy Nugent (editor), Gemma Short, and Martin Thomas

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